



Richard Bruton, T.D.
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

23rd March, 2021

PQ: 11998/21

To ask the Minister for Health if his Department has issued guidance on discretionary medical cards in respect of providing temporary cover during periods of intense care, such as for cancer patients in order that the stress of medical bills would be relieved for a period. -Richard Bruton.

Dear Deputy Bruton,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (Reference 11998/21), which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

The Medical Card scheme is based, in the first instance on a financial assessment of weekly income and means. The scheme is administered under the National Medical Card/GP Visit Card National Assessment Guidelines. These guidelines are available on the HSE website @ <https://www2.hse.ie/file-library/medical-cards/medical-cards-national-assessment-guidelines.pdf>. The HSE National Medical Card Unit must ensure that all applications for services covered by the General Medical Services (GMS) schemes are properly processed under the eligibility rules governing these schemes. A means test is undertaken at a point in time and the means tests considers both income and expenses. If an individual or family circumstance changes those will be considered in any application or re-application for a Medical Card or a GP Visit Card.

Applicants may be able to claim a Medical or GP Visit Card even if their income is above the means test limit(s). If an applicant does not qualify for a card based on a means test, the HSE can consider if the cost of meeting their or their family's medical and other health needs is fair and reasonable despite their income. If an application is made for a discretionary card, a HSE Medical Officer will assess the application.

The Medical Officer will consider if medical bills for the applicant or their dependants are likely to cause undue financial hardship. They will consider things like the cost of GP visits, medical and surgical services for the applicant and their dependants.

There are some emergency situations where Medical cards may be granted outside of the normal medical card application process. One of those circumstances is an emergency circumstance, where an individual is in need of urgent ongoing care which necessitates a medical card but the individual is not in a position to engage with a means test in the short term. A Health Care Professional (Social worker, Hospital Consultant or General Practitioner) may submit a medical report and a completed emergency application form (MC1e) in such circumstances. The form and medical report will be reviewed by a HSE Medical Officer and the Medical Officer will make a recommendation. If the Medical Officer makes a positive recommendation a temporary Medical Card or GP Visit Card can be provided for 6 months. The individual will have to apply for a standard means tested medical card within 6 months. The HSE considers such emergency applications within 24 – 48 hours of receipt. Additional Information on emergency applications is available on the HSE website @ <https://www2.hse.ie/services/medical-cards/emergency-medical-cards.html>

Yours sincerely,



Suzanne Doyle
Primary Care Eligibility & Reimbursement Service

The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services Scheme, which includes Medical Cards and GP Visit Cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to the status of Medical Cards and GP Visit Cards applications, which the Deputy / Senator may wish to use for an earlier response. Tel: 01-8647180 / email: Oireachtas.pcrs@hse.ie