



Niall Collins, T.D.  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

8<sup>th</sup> April, 2021

PQ: 15400/21

**To ask the Minister for Health if persons with Down syndrome are entitled to a medical card; the reason some holders of a medical card who have Down syndrome are having their medical cards reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Niall Collins.**

Dear Deputy Collins,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (Reference 15400/21), which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

Medical Card eligibility is primarily based on an assessment of means and is not granted on the basis of any particular condition of itself, (except in limited cases: e.g. children under 18 years with a cancer diagnosis; persons affected by drug Thalidomide; Symphysiotomy survivors).

All applications must be processed in accordance with the Medical Card/GP Visit Card National Assessment Guidelines. As you can appreciate we 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.

It should be noted that the recommendations of the Report of the Expert Panel on Medical Need for Medical Card Eligibility (Sep 2014), included the following:

- It is neither feasible nor desirable to list medical conditions in priority order for Medical Card eligibility
- In the context of finite resources, the current system is not without its merits for the great majority
- Financial hardship or means testing should remain the main criteria [for eligibility]

As part of the application process for Medical Card eligibility, applicants are invited to provide comprehensive information in relation to the costs associated with any illness and

the care needs of the applicant and/or any dependants. In the event that an applicant's means are above the financial threshold for the grant of Medical Card eligibility, other factors outlined in the application in relation to the burden of illness are taken into consideration and eligibility may be granted where it is deemed appropriate to exercise discretion because of the undue burden on the applicant and /or any dependants.

Please note that aside from the Medical Card, persons with an Intellectual Disability are entitled to apply for the Long Term Illness Scheme. Under the Long Term Illness Scheme, people suffering from certain conditions can get drugs, medicines and medical and surgical appliances for the treatment of that condition, free of charge. This scheme is administered by the Health Service Executive (HSE), under Section 59 of the Health Act 1970. Application for eligibility to the Long Term Illness Scheme is done through the Local Health Offices.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suzanne Doyle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Suzanne Doyle  
Primary Care Eligibility & Reimbursement Service