



Holly Cairns, T.D.  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

29<sup>th</sup> October 2021

PQ: 49593/21

**To ask the Minister for Health if he will put in place an appeals system for general practitioners who are refused payments by the primary care reimbursement services under the maternity and infant care scheme. -Holly Cairns**

Dear Deputy Cairns,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (Reference 49593/21), which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

The HSE Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) is responsible for making more than €3bn in payments to Primary Care Contractors (e.g. General Practitioners, Pharmacists, Dentists, Opticians etc.), suppliers of essential High Tech medicines, Acute Hospitals and others across a range of schemes and arrangements.

Payments totalling in excess of €780m were made to General Practitioners in 2020.

For 2020, in excess of €14m has been financially accrued in respect of expected claims under the Maternity and Infant scheme (note: claims under the scheme can be submitted after the cessation of care under the scheme so the HSE is required to financially accrue the costs of those expected claims). Payments of €7.198m were made by PCRS during 2020 in relation to the Scheme.

It should be noted that reimbursement payments to independent practitioners are not salary and practitioners must meet their business expenses out of same.

PCRS has a legal responsibility to ensure that resources are used for the purpose for which they are intended and is obliged verify the reasonableness and accuracy of all claims submitted for payment.

The Maternity and Infant Scheme provides an agreed programme of care to all expectant mothers who are ordinarily resident in Ireland. There is a specific contract for the scheme and legislation underpinning the fees (S.I No. 233 of 2016). Claims submitted for payment must be in accordance with the criteria under this S.I.

This scheme allows up to 6 routine antenatal visits with the expectant mother's GP of choice for the first pregnancy and up to 7 routine visits for subsequent pregnancies. This is in addition to the schedule of antenatal visits provided by the maternity hospitals, with further additional visits provided in hospital in the case of complicated pregnancies as required.

In accordance with the rules governing the scheme, expectant mothers with major conditions, e.g. diabetes or hypertension, may have up to 5 additional visits to their nominated GP. Where claims are validated as related to hypertension and / or gestational diabetes those claims are always paid. Care in respect of illnesses which are coincidental with, but not related to the pregnancy, does not form part of the scheme.

The Maternity and Infant Scheme was centralised within PCRS from 1 July 2019. Prior to centralisation, the scheme was operated at local level. With the advent of centralisation, PCRS has ensured that all claims for additional visits are reviewed, if appropriate, by Medical Officers (doctors) employed by PCRS. This ensures there is equitable access to the scheme across the country and that claims for additional visits are in accordance with contract/statutory instrument.

Where uncertainty arises in relation to a claim submitted for additional visits, GPs are requested to provide information to ensure the additional visits are in line with the rules of the scheme. Furthermore, in the case of claims initially rejected for payment, GPs may provide additional information to support these claim, in those circumstances, the initially rejected claim would be reviewed.

PCRS has a designated email for queries in relation to the scheme i.e. [PCRS.MaternityandInfant@hse.ie](mailto:PCRS.MaternityandInfant@hse.ie) and enquiries to this email or direct correspondence received from GP Practices are responded to as soon as possible. These contact details are provided in the PCRS Handbook for Doctors. This handbook is available at the following link: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/pcrs/contractor-handbooks/2020-doctors-handbook.pdf>

Yours sincerely,



Suzanne Doyle  
Primary Care Eligibility & Reimbursement Service