

2025.10.21

#### **4.5 Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North of the Minister for Social Security regarding free GP appointments for children (OQ.224/2025):**

Will the Minister advise whether any consideration has been given to amending the scheme of free G.P. appointments for children to a means-tested model, targeted at supporting children in lower-income households?

#### **Deputy L.V. Feltham of St. Helier Central (The Minister for Social Security):**

The short answer is no. The longer answer is that I would encourage the Deputy to look at my party manifesto, which is absolutely clear on my position around access to primary healthcare. I was incredibly proud when Deputy Alves was able to bring a proposition to this Assembly, and the Assembly accepted it, which made G.P. appointments free for all children and that should continue.

##### **4.5.1 Deputy M.B. Andrews:**

Obviously with the Health Insurance Fund with a sum value of £101 million forecast to go down to about £72 million in 4 years' time, what actions is the Minister going to take to try and curtail the extent of expenditure?

#### **Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

When it comes to expenditure it is important to consider that across the whole health service. Things like free G.P. appointments to children does relieve potential pressures on things like the Emergency Department. Because worried parents can check issues with G.P.s without fear of not being able to afford an appointment. As I have said time and time again in Scrutiny, I am working closely with the Minister for Health and Social Services. The Minister for Health and Social Services has a far-reaching piece of work around health budgets and health funding. It is really important that we see primary care as part of that.

##### **4.5.2 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:**

Would the Minister speak to the advantages of not means-testing for young children when it comes to G.P. visits? Does she agree that those advantages might include that means-testing itself can be quite an expensive and complicated process but also that children generally themselves do not have independent wealth or income and, therefore, children should not necessarily be expected to pay for their own G.P. visits?

#### **Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

Yes, I am always very mindful that children and young adults do not have independent income necessarily, and of course that is why we extended the G.P. access to full-time students as well in acknowledgement of that. I think we need to be very careful when we talk about means-testing. Just a few moments ago the Chief Minister was asked about cost-of-living pressures on middle-income earners. Such a means test on G.P. visits for children would absolutely hit possibly those middle-income earners that the Assembly is so concerned about. This is a very real factor in relation to cost of living. People should not be afraid to go to their G.P. People should seek as early intervention as possible and that will lead to further savings in the long run, both in terms of quality of life for people but also in savings in the secondary care sector.

##### **4.5.3 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour:**

The previous question covered most of what I wanted to ask. But does the Minister agree that children's human rights cannot and should not be means-tested?

**Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

Yes, absolutely I agree with that.