

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 30th NOVEMBER 2010**

**Question**

Can the Minister provide evidence to support her statement at the Health, Social Security and Housing Scrutiny hearing on 8th November 2010, that there has been significant growth in non-urgent attendances at the Hospital's Accident and Emergency department, particularly in relation to the period from 2006 to 2009 following the introduction of Income Support and the removal of free GP attendances associated with HIE?

**Answer**

Information that would evidence the split between major and minor, often inappropriate, attendances - such as coughs and colds and those with ongoing longer term conditions - is not easily identified from the data currently collected. This will change in the latter half of next year following the introduction of the new patient information system. This will adopt the national triage assessment category that includes a code of 'non-urgent' for those patients whose condition is neither a true accident nor an emergency.

Each year there are almost 40,000 attendances to the Accident and Emergency (A&E) department. This has remained fairly constant since 2006 although activity within the GP Coop has seen an increase within the same period and it can be assumed that at least some of these patients would otherwise have attended the Accident and Emergency department.

An audit by the College of Emergency Medicine based on assessment at triage, found that 10-30% of patients across the UK were more suited to primary care access rather than to an Emergency Department. It is this data that leads us to conclude that Jersey has a problem of inappropriate attendances in A&E. For example latest information for Jersey and the Isle of Wight indicates that both islands have the same number of attendances (39,000) even though the population of the Isle of Wight is 50% bigger.

Moreover it is possible that Jersey will have a rate of inappropriate attendances as high, if not higher, than the UK because patients required to pay for a visit to their GP are currently given the incentive of free care at the local A&E department as has been noted anecdotally.

As significant growth in local inappropriate attendances is yet to be evidenced any link with the introduction of Income Support cannot be ascertained, as was confirmed at the Health, Social Security and Housing Scrutiny hearing held on 8th November 2010.