

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 20th JANUARY 2009

Question

Will the Minister provide an accurate and comprehensive statement for members regarding the cost of extending free GP access to an additional 4,000 households, including those with high medical needs, lone parents, couples with children and pensioners, as I suggested in my amendment to the 2009 Business Plan ('Annual Business Plan 2009 (P.113/2008) Sixth Amendment')?

Answer

The Income Support scheme provides a number of ways in which low income households can receive financial support with GP bills and other medical costs. In particular, additional assistance is now available to any individual in a low income household who has a long term medical condition and needs regular GP check ups. In the case of a sudden bout of illness, requiring a number of GP visits, any income support claimant may receive help through a one-off payment to meet this cost.

I would be reluctant to provide an accurate and comprehensive statement on the proposal suggested by the Deputy as I am not convinced at this time that providing free GP access to all the categories of household suggested (regardless of their medical needs) would be a prudent and well targeted use of public funds.

I will however review the evidence in this area to determine if any changes are needed to the existing system. The funding of primary care in general is also being considered by Health & Social Services at present as part of a wider review of primary care services and any changes to Income Support would need to be carefully co-ordinated with Health & Social Services policies.