

REPLY BY THE MINISTER OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY DEPARTMENT TO A QUESTION ASKED PURSUANT TO RULE 6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE BY DEPUTY A H ADAM

Question

In cases where a patient is referred by an MSG Consultant to a UK hospital for major operation, as a contract patient, which of the following are covered by SSD?:

1. *Flight from Guernsey to UK and onward transport to the hospital.*
2. *Surgical services and inpatient treatment.*
3. *Transport arranged by UK hospital to UK airport.*
4. *Flight from UK to Guernsey.*
5. *Suitable transport from aircraft to patient's home or hospital bed in Guernsey.*

There is a relative pressure on beds in many UK hospitals and patients may be discharged within a few days of undergoing major surgery. It should be noted that in the last sentence of the admission letter sent to such patients by University Hospital Southampton, it suggests supported travel arrangements are required for the complete journey from hospital to the patient's home

From recent information I gather the policy in relation to 5 above has changed. Relatives or friends of the patient must make, and pay for, these arrangements, without the benefit of medical knowledge of what may be required to meet the needs of the patient.

I am led to believe that any reclaim from SSD for the costs of such local transport arrangements are 'means tested', and no arrangements made by those in Guernsey who know what services are available to meet specific patient needs.

Would you please expand on what the present situation is so that the public is fully aware of the situation?

Answer

Patients

In cases where a patient is referred by a consultant employed by the Medical Specialist Group, or indeed, any other approved medical practitioner, to a UK hospital for an operation, the Social Security Department covers the cost of their return flight and transportation to and from the hospital in the UK, subject to the treatment being unavailable locally. The Department is also permitted under the law to cover the cost of return flights and transportation to and from hospitals in Jersey and France, although this is a far less common occurrence.

The cost of surgical services and inpatient treatment is covered by the Health and Social Services Department.

The Social Security Department covers the cost of ambulance transfers from Guernsey Airport to the Princess Elizabeth Hospital, except in cases where the patient has paid a

Supporters Scheme subscription, in which case no charge is levied by St John's Ambulance for the service.

As regards discharge from treatment in the UK, ambulance transfers are arranged by the discharge staff at the relevant UK hospital. In the case of patients of University Hospital Southampton, a dedicated 'Channel Islands Liaison Team' makes the necessary arrangements for transferring patients by ambulance from hospital to Southampton Airport and from Guernsey Airport to the Princess Elizabeth Hospital.

The Social Security Department does not organize or cover the cost of transportation from Guernsey Airport to the patient's home. I can confirm that there has been no change in policy in this regard.

For clarification purposes, the Department does not cover the return travel expenses of individuals who have been injured or fallen seriously ill while overseas for non-medical purposes. These must be met by the individual or their insurance provider.

Escorts

The patient's medical practitioner determines whether a medical or non-medical escort is required to accompany the patient to and/or from their medical appointment in the UK. Different rules apply in respect of funding the travel arrangements for medical and non-medical escorts.

- Medical escorts

A medical escort is a doctor, nurse or member of the St John's Ambulance and is requested by the patient's medical practitioner in cases where the patient may need medical attention during the journey to or from the hospital in the UK.

For medical escorts, the Social Security Department covers the cost of their return flights and transportation to and from the hospital in the UK.

- Non-medical escorts

A non-medical escort tends to be a family member or friend of the patient who, because of the patient's medical condition, is required to provide assistance during the journey to enable the patient to attend the hospital appointment.

The Department only covers the travel costs of non-medical escorts if the patient is a child or if it is determined that the patient cannot reasonably afford to meet the costs themselves, assessed through a basic means-test based on the patient's means.

For children under 6, the Department will cover the cost of travel for two non-medical escorts, usually the child's parents, on a non-means-tested basis. For children aged 6 and over, and under 18, the Department will ordinarily cover the cost of travel for one non-medical escort, on a non-means-tested basis. A second escort may be approved in exceptional circumstances, for example if the child has a disability. The decision as to whether to cover the costs of that second escort is based on the child's parents' means. Only in exceptional cases may non-medical escorts be provided without the-means-test.

Accommodation expenses for a child's non-medical escort(s) may be covered on a means-tested basis, based on the child's parents' means, through the Travelling Expenses Assistance Scheme (TEAS). This scheme is funded from General Revenue.

Patients aged 18 or over may apply for financial assistance with their non-medical escort's travel and accommodation costs through TEAS.

The Department does not cover the cost of parking at Guernsey Airport or the cost of a taxi to and from Guernsey Airport for patients or non-medical escorts.

Review

The Department intends to review the policies and legislation in respect of the Travelling Allowance Grant and the Travelling Expenses Assistance Scheme during 2016.

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Date of Reply: 2nd October 2015