

TRAVELLERS' HEALTH

Title: Travellers' Health
Date: 30 September 2000
Document Type: Letter

From: Department of Health and Children
To: Each Primary Care Unit Manager

Re: Travellers' Health

The General Medical Services Scheme provides for a broadly based general practitioner service. This minute is concerned to emphasise two related points. First, that all persons with medical cards are entitled to access and avail of the services provided on an equal basis and with regard to equality of outcome. Secondly, that all contracted doctors are required to operate the scheme without discrimination towards any group of persons or particular individuals within a group solely on the basis of their membership of that group. The aforementioned points have always been applicable but are now particularly so in the context of accepted equal status principles.

The view has been expressed at the Traveller Health Advisory Committee (THAC) that some general practitioners do not observe this requirement in respect of Travellers. The consequence of this is that a significant number of Travellers experience difficulties accessing and availing of general practitioner services.

Notwithstanding that the THAC is currently finalising a draft Strategy Paper for submission to the Minister for Health & Children dealing with the healthcare of Travellers generally, it appears opportune to ask all Primary Care Unit Managers to consider how this matter can best be addressed and to take such action in their areas as is required to give effect to the medical card entitlements of Travellers as regards accessing and availing of general practitioner services.

Peter Lennon
GMS Division
30 September 2000