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Paula a chara

LEGISLATIVE CONSENT MOTION – HEALTH SERVICES: MEDICAL SUPPLIES (COSTS) BILL

Following their attendance at the Health Committee on 6 October my officials agreed to provide further background information on the Health Services Medical Supplies (Costs) Bill. Subsequently, the Clerk to the Committee, Ellis Haughey, wrote to the Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer, Jonathan Bill seeking information about negotiations with the pharmaceutical industry on the Bill; the definition of “medical supplies”; and the anticipated impact of the Bill on GP practices.

The Department of Health (London) (DH) carried out a formal consultation on the part of the Bill relating to proposed changes to the statutory scheme for controlling the price of branded medicines. During the consultation, which closed in December 2015, the DH held roundtable events with representatives of the pharmaceutical industry. As consultation responses queried whether the Government had sufficient powers to make the proposed changes to the statutory scheme, the DH took the view that amendments were required to the NHS Act 2006. This has led to the introduction of the Health Services Medical Supplies (Costs) Bill.

The DH has also advised that following the passage of the legislation, they intend to consult further on the operation of the scheme. They anticipate that this further consultation will take place over the spring/summer of 2017.


Within the Bill the definition of “medical supplies” includes “surgical, dental and optical materials and equipment”. I can confirm that wheelchairs would fall within the definition of “equipment”.



The Committee further asked about the anticipated impact of the Bill on GP practices. It is not considered that there will be any impact on the vast majority of GP practices. However, as the Bill contains regulation making powers to obtain information from dispensing GPs, there have been discussions with the British Medical Association General Practitioners' Committee (BMA/GPC). No concerns were raised. As the north of Ireland has only eight dispensing GPs it is not expected to impact significantly on local practices. It is worth noting, however, that GP representative bodies would be included within the scope of the consultation on any proposed regulations.

I hope this helps clarify the position.

Is mise le meas

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michelle O'Neill', written in a cursive style.

MICHELLE O'NEILL MLA
Minister of Health