

Over 3,500 got medical cards weeks after U-turn

MORE than 3,500 people got their discretionary medical cards back within the first fortnight of the Government's medical card U-turn, new documents reveal.

The controversial removal of medical cards for seriously ill children and adults provoked a massive backlash and was seen as one of the main reasons behind Fine Gael and Labour's battering in the polls during the local and European elections earlier this year.

The controversy, which the Irish Daily Mail actively campaigned against, was also seen as playing a factor in the removal of James Reilly as Minister for Health.

Briefing documents prepared for Leo Varadkar on taking over from Dr Reilly as Minister now reveal between the Government's U-turn in late May until the beginning of June, the number of individuals who had 'eligibility to a medical card or GP visit card on a discretionary basis' rose from 80,226 to 83,797.

One individual who had her medical card reinstated was Moya Nason, a five-year-old girl who suffers from cerebral palsy. Despite her in-

By **Eamon Donoghue** and **Jennifer Bray**

curable condition, her card was put under review earlier this year, with repeat demands on her parents by the HSE for more information.

After the Government's U-turn, her father Andy Nason said she received her card within three weeks.

'We were very happy,' Mr Nason told the Mail. 'The return of the medical card took about three weeks after the initial statement, originally it was to be extended but then we just got a replacement card.'

Mr Nason, who lives with his wife Orlaith and young family in Leixlip, Co. Kildare, spearheaded a campaign to have medical cards restored to all children with long-term conditions. They were backed by the Mail. This newspaper confronted both Enda Kenny and Dr Reilly on the issue.

And Mr Nason said that he isn't at all surprised by the quick return of the cards, and said he was expecting his daughter's card sooner.

'We're lucky because we only use the one GP and the one pharmacy.



Took over: The document was prepared for Health Minister Leo Varadkar

30,000 ask for tests back

ABOUT 30,000 people have come forward to request their heel prick test cards back from the HSE.

The cards were among around a million destined for destruction on the advice of the Data Commissioner.

The HSE launched a campaign last year offering people the opportunity to have their newborn blood spot screening cards destroyed because permission was never obtained from parents to store them.

'The HSE has received approximately 30,000 requests from people seeking to have cards returned to them,' according to a briefing document given to the Health Minister Leo Varadkar.

State is sued over flu jabs

TWELVE people who developed the debilitating sleep disorder narcolepsy after getting the swine flu jab have launched legal actions against the State.

The proceedings were confirmed in briefing documents to Health Minister Leo Varadkar.

The documents confirmed that the Irish Medicines Board has received 62 reports confirming a diagnosis of narcolepsy in children and young adults who were vaccinated with Pandemrix during the 2009-10 pandemic.

They were among 900,000 individuals who were vaccinated with Pandemrix which is made by GlaxoSmithKline. The legal action is being taken against the Minister, the HSE and GlaxoSmithKline.

And they were confident throughout the process that it would be cleared up, so they were treating us while we were waiting after the announcement and even throughout the entire process,' he said. 'But no I'm not surprised, and I wasn't when they rang, it was a trickle effect.'

The briefing document also shows that the waiting list for the 'Fair Deal' nursing home support scheme is set to grow significantly in the coming months. Under the scheme,

successful applicants will make a contribution towards the cost of their care and the State pays the balance.

On June 19, the briefing document showed there were 1,390 people on the list awaiting funding, with an average waiting time of ten weeks.

However, by the end of this year, the HSE estimates that the waiting time for the release of funding will be '14-16 weeks'.

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