

2.6 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding insurance to cover the costs of residential and nursing care:

Would the Minister confirm whether or not he supports the principle of insurance to help cover the costs of residential and nursing care, and, if so, inform the House when he proposes to bring forward proposals to introduce such insurance?

Senator S. Syvret (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

Yes, I fully support the principle of mandatory social insurance scheme to cover the cost of residential nursing home and community primary care. The “in principle” decision to introduce such a scheme will come to the States as part of the new directions health and social care strategy. It is hoped to publish these proposals in green paper form at the end of this year. Subject to consultation and scrutiny a proposition will be brought to the States for debate early next year. Assuming the Assembly supports the proposals, the Employment and Social Security Department will then develop the necessary legislation.

2.6.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Thank you, Sir, that is indeed good news. Can I therefore infer from thereon, Sir, and referring to the Minister of Employment and Social Security earlier on, Sir, that we are firmly going ahead now and we will simply be faced next year with transitional arrangements? Firstly, Sir, are we firmly going ahead with the full approval or full involvement of Employment and Social Security? Secondly, Sir, could the Minister tell us what steps he intends to take to deal in the interim with some of the incredible anomalies which presently exist within the system?

Senator S. Syvret:

To take the last system first, as the previous question on this covered somewhat exhaustively, there are anomalies in the present system; the present system is inadequate, but I have to say the prospects in all practicality of doing anything about the present system for the next year or so are remote to say the least. The Assembly simply does not have the additional money needed to put towards these things at the moment. Yes, we are definitely moving towards proposals for the social insurance scheme that will cover the cost of continuing care. As I said, it will be published as part of the health strategy at the end of this year. It will then be subject to public consultation, subject to the scrutiny process, subject to the vagaries of public opinion, subject ultimately to a debate in this Assembly. So, all I can say is I am committed to bring forward such proposals, whether they will be introduced definitely or not is dependent on all the political factors.

2.6.2 Deputy J.A. Martin:

It is good to hear that they will be coming forward under the New Directions. Could I just ask the Minister, as New Directions is going to be a very, very large piece of work is there not a possibility that you could bring the insurance strategy as a stand-alone proposition, because to my knowledge, Sir, when I was on the Health Committee, this must have been worked on for at least 4 to 5 years, and this is where the frustration is coming. Could the Minister not consider this please, Sir?

Senator S. Syvret:

Sir, the actual New Directions strategy is very near to completion, and will in fact be published for discussion at the end of this year. So, the actual decisions that will flow from that strategy, if it is approved by the States, will be multi-faceted. A range of new pieces of legislation will need to be introduced - restructuring and remodelling of health and social care - so there will be a staggered process of introducing the changes, assuming the strategy gets approval of the States. Clearly, moving forward with the social insurance scheme would be one of those priority components of the strategy, which we would wish to move forward on quite quickly.

2.6.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

To clarify the situation in the interim, could the Minister inform us what number of people investigated by the States end up in nursing care with full support, as currently defined, and what number have to provide for their own care financially?

Senator S. Syvret:

I would need notice of that question.

The Bailiff:

Very well, we come now to the final oral question by Deputy Southern of the Chief Minister.