

3.12 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Social Security regarding the coverage of financial support for up to 10,000 unpaid carers:

What measures does the Minister for Social Security in conjunction with the Minister for Health and Social Services have under consideration to increase the coverage of financial support for the up to 10,000 unpaid carers reported in J.A.S.S. (Jersey Annual Social Survey) 2009 and 2013 and referred to in a written answer on 2nd December 2013 from the Minister for Health and Social Services and, if not, why not?

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley (The Minister for Social Security):

The Deputy asked an oral question on this subject on 19th November and a written question was submitted by Deputy Higgins on 2nd December. A considerable amount of information regarding support for carers has already been provided in response to both those questions. As previously confirmed, there are 2 specific financial benefits available from the Social Security Department to support carers: Home Carer's Allowance, that is available principally to working-age carers who give up employment to become a carer, and the Income Support Carer's Allowance which supports low income carers of any age. The carers' strategy developed by the Health and Social Services Department in 2009 has recently been refreshed and the Minister for Health and Social Services has previously confirmed that her department has received additional dedicated funding from the Medium-Term Financial Plan as part of the overall health strategy to be used to achieve improved services and support for carers. As part of the carers' strategy, questions had been included in the last 2 Jersey Annual Social Surveys. The 2009 report identified that the support provided to friends and family members by the thousands of carers in Jersey ranged from one hour per week to many hours per day. The areas where carers would appreciate more support was explored in the 2013 survey and the Health and Social Services Department is now developing additional services for carers based on these results. Later today, we will start to debate the details of the new Long-Term Care Scheme; one of the key drivers for this project has been to improve support for people who wish to be cared for at home. For people with high-level care needs, in many cases the new scheme will mean that a carer who wishes to continue to look after their family member at home will be able to use the new benefit to pay for a care package to complement the unpaid care that they provide. I can confirm that I am working very closely with the Minister for Health and Social Services on this vital project.

3.12.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Minister for Social Security is obviously aware of the numbers in receipt of invalid care allowance being a mere 192 in the last annual report, and also only 133 Income Support claims, which include a carer's component as of 31st December 2012. Does the Minister for Social Security have specific targets to improve and increase the number of carers who find some funding from his department and does he have specific targets as to how to increase that?

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

We do not set targets for how many people we would like to receive a benefit; the benefit system is there for people to take advantage of if they fall into the qualifying conditions. It is correct that the invalid care allowance, which of course is now called Home Carer's Allowance, is now a statutory benefit paid out of the Social Security Fund.

[11:00]

There is information on the States website, but also the Association of Jersey Carers and social workers are well aware of the benefits and would advise people who are providing up

to 35 hours' a week care to apply for this benefit, in the same way we have had the carer's component of Income Support for over 5 years now, and people are aware of it.

3.12.2 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

After the social survey the Statistics Department have come up with an estimate of 10,000 unofficial-type carers in the Island. Does the Minister for Social Security have a real idea of the total number? Has his department done any investigation of numbers?

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

Further work has been done by the Health and Social Services Department in producing their carers' strategy, 2013/2015. It has identified that approximately 2,000 carers provide support to an individual for 4 hours or more per day. In developing services for carers, concentration will be on better information and advice, including advice on how to claim the benefits that I referred to earlier, but in particular access to more respite care. It has not been specified, particularly in the social survey or any further meetings that financial issues are of a particular concern to the majority of carers. I do not intend at my department to do any further work because, really, this is a Health and Social Services Department-led project.

3.12.3 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

The Minister for Social Security talks of the Health and Social Services Department talking about 2,000 carers, but the Statistics Department are talking about 10,000. Has nobody any idea how many there are?

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

What I was pointing out to the Senator was that the 10,000 carers can range from doing 4 hours a week to 4 hours per day. Obviously, a social survey is sent to a limited number of people; one would have to do a questionnaire to every single person in the Island to get more detailed information, but clearly, some people do a very limited amount of caring, perhaps by doing some shopping or popping in and seeing a relative to perhaps help them with their hair or something like that, whereas others are full-on carers who do more than 4 hours per day.

3.12.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

A specific question: the Minister for Social Security has said that he is not prepared to do any more work on this area. Would he consider contacting the 411 recipients of Personal Component Care Level 3 under Income Support, only one third of whom receive the Carer's Component, to ask if they had thought of applying for the Carer's Component and therefore getting some recompense for the hours that they spend as a carer?

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

I think the Deputy is mixing the role of the Personal Care Component Level 3, which is to award somebody who has a medical condition which is so serious that they need to have a considerable amount of assistance with day-to-day living. The purpose of the award, which is about £145 extra per week, is to be able to buy in services, not necessarily to have somebody come in as a carer and therefore be receiving a Carer's Component. However, he has made a valid point and I will discuss this with officers.