

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 8th OCTOBER 2013**

Question

Will the Minister inform members what progress, if any, has been made in reviewing the Jersey Dental Fitness Scheme and the Westfield Dental Scheme for over 65's in the light of the commitment to do so in response to SR.12/2010 ('Review of Dental Services') and his own commitment, given to the Assembly on 6th December 2011 "...I will undertake to ensure that 2 issues identified by the Scrutiny Panel review of dental health services will be prioritised within my departmental business plan for 2012" and " to review the provision of assistance with dental costs under both these schemes during 2012" and if none, will he state why?

Will he further state whether he intends to put funded measures to address these issues into his business plans for 2014, if necessary using some of the £13m underspends his department has recently identified and, if not, why not?

Will he also state what actions, if any, he will take in 2014 in the area of access to primary health care under the objectives outlined in the MTFP 2013-2015 in key objectives 2 (iv) and 3 (vi)?

Answer

Since the statement made at the end of 2011, the Assembly has approved P.82/2012 - Health and Social Services: A new way forward, which endorsed the following action:

"(b) to request the Council of Ministers to co-ordinate the necessary steps by all relevant Ministers to bring forward for approval –

...

(ii) proposals to develop a new model of Primary Care (including General Medical Practitioners, Dentists, high street Optometrists and Pharmacists... ",

Whilst, as Minister for Social Security, I remain responsible for the provision of tax funded benefits to support dental costs to teenagers (Jersey Dental Fitness Scheme), those aged 65 and above (65+Westfield health scheme) and low income groups (Income Support special payments), any review or change to these benefits should now be considered in the context of the more general review of primary care that is taking place as part of P.82/2012.

However, I can confirm that the terms and conditions of the Jersey Dental Fitness Scheme are currently being reviewed and as soon as this review is concluded I will announce the changes and lodge for approval by the States any consequential legislative amendment/s.

The departmental 2013 Business Plan includes the following two objectives:

"PR.21 Review access to Income Support services for older residents and implement operational changes as necessary."

PR.22 Prepare and seek approval for primary legislation in respect of Food Costs Bonus and Cold Weather Bonus, currently enacted through triennial regulations.”

As part of these actions in respect of improving access to benefits available to older residents, access to the 65+ Westfield health scheme will also be reviewed.

Members will be aware that it is intended to allocate the anticipated underspend in the 2013 Social Security budget to the long-term care fund, allowing the new long-term care benefits to commence in July 2014, in advance of LTC contributions which will not be collected until 2015.

The Medium Term Financial Plan includes the following:

SSD key objective 2: *Protect Islanders from the impacts of low income.*

SSD key objective 3: *Adequate income for old age, affordable for our children. Assist older Islander to maintain standards of living by means that are financially sustainable for future generations.*

Both headings include the same sub-objective: (2(iv) and 3(vi)):

Health Service Reforms include support to low income groups and those with long term conditions to enable them to access health services, including primary care

As noted above, the Council of Ministers has been tasked with bringing forward proposals for sustainable Primary Care and the Social Security Department is supporting the delivery of this review. In particular, the primary care review has been designed to include a specific piece of work in respect of access to primary care services for low-income groups.