

3.20 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Social Security regarding the provision of sufficient financial support for carers:

In the light of moves to encourage those in need of care to remain in their own homes for as long as possible does the Minister consider that the changes to Invalid Care Allowance (now Home Care Allowance) as agreed in P.101/2012 (Social Security (Amendment of Law No. 4) (Jersey) Regulations 2012) provide sufficient financial support for carers?

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

Members will recall my response to an almost identical written question from Deputy Southern answered on 3rd June. I am happy to repeat that I considered the replacement of Invalid Care Allowance by Home Carers Allowance to be a positive step. The value of the benefit available to carers did not change. In addition, as explained in the written answer, additional support is available through the income support system for low income families. Again, as noted in my previous response, the new long-term care scheme will improve the financial support available to people being cared for in their own homes. The Long-Term Care scheme will be operational from 1st July of this year. This scheme provides support to the person receiving care rather than the carer. However, where care is being provided by a family member the cost of respite services can be included in the calculation of the amounts of Long-Term Care benefit available.

3.20.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is it not the case that for those in work they can claim Home Care Allowance, which amounts to around £190 a week, whereas if people are not in work - if they are unemployed - that would negate their income support payment and they can only claim an additional £40-something through the Invalid Care component in income support?

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

If a working age person is not in work and they are receiving income support they should be a jobseeker and the view of the department is that anybody who is a carer for somebody who has care needs, which we assess at level 3, would no longer need to be a job seeker and that person, if they are living in an income support household, would receive the carer's component. What perhaps Deputy Southern is overlooking is that in Home Carers Allowance there is no disregard so if that person was to be awarded Home Carers Allowance their income support claim would reduce accordingly.

3.20.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Precisely, and that causes a difference in the financial reward for one set of carers to another set of carers. In addition ... the Minister is shaking his head but I think that is the case. In addition, it is very difficult to claim Invalid Carers Allowance because now there is a contributory condition placed on it. You have got to have paid contributions six months before you want to look after your elderly relative, in this particular case. If you are unemployed that will not have happened so therefore you cannot claim it. It is a result of changes that this Minister made in order to bring that into the contributory scheme. Is that the case?

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

An unemployed person who is made redundant would receive Social Security contribution credits. An unemployed person who wishes to continue to protect their entitlement to benefits can pay class 2 contributions, if they wish. The simple position is that this benefit is

for working age people. The average age of current claimants is 51, it is a working age benefit, and there is no need to, as far as I am concerned, change the rules.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I return to the question not answered. Does this create a 2-tier scheme whereby some people can only apply for the component at £47, I think it is, and some can claim the £145 and still earn. So there is 2-tier and a lack of encouragement for one set of people to become carers for their elderly relatives?

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

Everybody of working age has to pay social security contributions. It is a fact of life unfortunately. Some people receive credits. For example, a woman or a man looking after a child under the age of 10 can receive home responsibility protection. People going to university can receive credits. There are a number of situations where people are exempt from paying contributions. But the fact is, that this is a benefit that requires contributions. There is a period of 6 months before you can claim a benefit if you have not paid in the relevant quarter. So the situation could be that if somebody expects to be a carer for a long length of time they can pay one month's contribution in the relevant quarter and claim the benefit after 6 months. So it is available to people who are not in work.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

But if they are unemployed they can only get credits.

The Bailiff:

I am sorry, Deputy, I think (a) it was the last question and (b) we have run out of time. So I am sorry the Connétable's question falls away. We come then to questions to Ministers without notice and the first period is to the Minister for Health and Social Services.