

2015.10.05

3.3 Deputy J.A. Martin of the Minister for Social Security regarding the payment of Child Personal Care benefit:

Given that the Personal Care benefit is now determined by the child's disability rather than the parents' household income, can the Minister provide the number of children who, since 1st January 2015, have received Child Personal Care benefit level 2 and level 3 and state whether this is an increase on previous years?

Deputy S.J. Pinel of St. Clement (The Minister for Social Security):

I can provide the Deputy with the number of claims of Child Personal Care benefit and payment at the end of September this year. The department is currently supporting 37 claims at level 2 and 97 claims at level 3, a total of 134 claims. This is an increase of 46 on the figures for August last year before the recent changes to the law. At that time, there were 20 claims being paid at level 2 and 68 claims at level 3.

3.3.1 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Can the Minister confirm the extra children, or the families who are claiming for the children on level 3, were getting nothing before the Assembly approved that it was on the children's disability and not the household income? I make that about 30-odd families that the department did not know about or that were receiving no money. Is that correct?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

I do not know the exact figure of the numbers on level 3 before this came in, but the amendments to the law brought by Deputy Martin only affected level 2 claims.

3.3.2 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier:

I do not believe that to be true, that last statement. However, what I do want to understand is that prior to the change in law brought by Deputy Martin, the acceptance of a level 2 or level 3 claim was based on Ministerial discretion. How many of these 97 on level 3 were subject to Ministerial discretion previously?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

There have been a higher number than expected claims for Personal Care level 3 element, which has produced 20 entirely new claims. That is representing a £75,500 increase in cost from January to June this year.

3.3.3 Deputy J.A. Martin:

The Minister did not answer my question to Deputy Southern. So there were 20 children out there before the Personal Care level 3 - can she confirm this - that the department did not know about, because it was based on the household income and not how severely disabled the child was. 20 children in 9 months, is that correct?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

That is the correct figure and these people are not necessarily on income support, so it is very difficult to know the exact numbers of households that do not come forward to claim. We only know the ones that do of Personal Care level 3 children.

3.3.4 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Will the Minister not agree this is why we took this benefit out of income support? It is based on the child's disability. How is this Minister advertising, or talking to Health, when children with a disability are born? They should be given this information, that there is a benefit there for them. Is she not doing this?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

The change to the law mentioned by Deputy Martin has been very widely advertised through Health and in all the schools and playgroups, nurseries. It has been very widely advertised and I think that is why there has been quite a good take-up.