

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 13TH SEPTEMBER 2016**

Question

Given the statement in her response to ‘Zero-Hour Contracts’ (S.R.3/2016) that she wishes to prioritise further improvements in family friendly policies, will the Minister undertake to improve on "Family Friendly" and "1001 Days" initiatives by proposing to give employees the right to 26 weeks of maternity leave supported by maternity allowance paid for from contributions?

Since the debate on ‘Maternity leave: rights of employees’ (P.104/2014) in July 2014, has the Minister considered or consulted upon possible improvements in this area and, if so, will she report to Members the outcomes of any such consultation?

Answer

On 2 February this year, the Minister answered a similar question from Deputy Doublet as follows -

“I have said that I will direct the Employment Forum to review family friendly legislation later this year. This is confirmed in my department’s business plan for 2016. The Forum will make recommendations to me following a period of public consultation and I will base my decisions on these recommendations. I have said on previous occasions that I would like to see a longer period of maternity leave, however we will develop the proposed scope of the Forum’s review later this year. If Members have any suggestions they are welcome to contact me.”¹

The Minister’s commitment to review the family friendly rights after one year in force is also recorded by the Health and Social Security Scrutiny Panel in the outcomes of its review of the family friendly legislation, as follows –

“The Panel has also been assured that the Amendment will be reviewed one year following its introduction to look at the overall impact and any areas that may need to be amended can be done through future regulations. The Panel has also agreed that within its legacy report, it will strongly recommend that the next HSSH Scrutiny Panel follow up on these assurances and ensure the necessary scrutiny is undertaken.” In response to a number of questions in the States Assembly, the Minister has since confirmed that she intends to instruct the Forum to conduct this review.”²

The Minister will not propose any changes to the legislation before the Forum’s review has been completed. In accordance with the Department’s business plan and the Minister’s stated intentions, now that one year has passed since the amendment to the Employment Law came into force, the Minister has directed the Forum to review the existing family friendly employment rights with a view to extending them in a second stage of protection. The Forum has specifically been directed to consider extending the rights to provide a longer period of maternity leave. The Forum will start work on this review later this year, unless the Minister is required to re-direct the Forum to consult instead on other Employment Law changes.

At the Minister’s request, the States of Jersey Statistics Unit included a number of questions relating to maternity, paternity and adoption leave in the ‘Jersey Lifestyles and Opinions Survey’ (JLOS) this year. The outcomes of that survey will be available in December 2016.

¹www.statesassembly.gov.je/AssemblyQuestions/2016/Dep%20Doublet%20to%20SS%20re%20designating%20maternity%20leave%20as%20parental%20leave%20available%20to%20either%20parent.pdf

²[www.statesassembly.gov.je/AssemblyPropositions/2014/P.109-2014Com\(2\).pdf](http://www.statesassembly.gov.je/AssemblyPropositions/2014/P.109-2014Com(2).pdf)

A major review of the Social Security scheme is underway and an initial public consultation is planned for later this year. The purpose is to place the Social Security fund on a sustainable footing for the future. The review will take several years to complete and it will seek to understand the extent to which people in Jersey value each benefit and the role each plays in supporting people with life's events. Maternity grant, adoption grant and the weekly maternity allowance currently cost around £2.5 million each year and are expected to be considered as part of this review.