

2016.11.01

3.4 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding applications for Long-Term Care benefit and Income Support Personal Care Component 4: [9695]

I hope nobody gets afraid of this question. How many applicants for Long-Term Care benefit have been processed since its introduction and with what average waiting time; how many applicants for both Long-Term Care and the new Income Support Personal Care Component 4 are expected on an annual basis, and what contingency plans, if any, are under consideration to ensure the proper level of funding is in place for 1st January 2017?

Senator A.K.F. Green (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

I apologise in advance, this is quite a long answer but that was a multi-faceted question. I do not have the number of applicants for Long-Term Care benefit since the introduction. The average waiting time, as with all the average waiting times, we would need to look back through every single application. However, thanks to my colleague, the Minister for Social Security, I can give you some information about current waiting times. I am informed that new claims where all the information from the customer, including the proofs, copies of the information required... and providing the information is available from my department, these are processed straightaway.

[10:00]

Separately, 31 claims of changes in circumstances are currently being processed. There are 107 claims that are in the process of being assessed by my department for onward transmission to Social Security for processing. The number of applicants for both Long-Term Care and the Income Support Component 4 expected on an annual basis I have answered in the written question. The number of new applications for the process... propose the flexible personal care component will depend on the number of new clients who choose to make an application for income support, following the introduction of the new component. Many of the Family Nursing and Home Care clients already receive income support. Picking up on the contingency plans that the Deputy asked me about, following discussions between Social Services and Family Nursing and Home Care, it has been agreed that we are likely to continue the subsidy until at least July 2017, therefore building in the contingency that the Deputy was referring to.

3.4.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

I thank the Minister for showing due consideration to the reality of the size of the task facing him with 107 new applicants and 31 changes of circumstance waiting to be delivered. It seems unlikely to me that those are going to be processed, given the history of waiting times in the period between now and 1st January. But does he not consider that his wish to fully fund particular services is rather held back by the fact, as he has mentioned in the answer to question 14, that the delivery of funding takes place in 3 tranches, where in 2016 nearly £6 million is allocated as a lump sum to go between district nursing, home care, children's services, health visiting, school nurses and community paediatrics? Would it not be a better place to start from if he had a fair idea of where those 6 services... how those 6 services and to what extent they were being funded separately, rather than as a lump sum of £6 million?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

For once Deputy Southern and I are absolutely at one and for that reason my officers met with the finance team of Family Nursing to break down those figures and to fully understand what fully

funded means for each of the items of our services that I have mentioned before. I totally agree with the Deputy and we are working on that.

3.4.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Minister misses the point. Does he not consider that it would have been better to have sorted this well in advance of changing the funding stream for home care so that he had something in place? This is 2015 £6.4 million, 2016 £5.9 million, lump sums sitting there unanalysed. Why did he not have a better breakdown before he went into this negotiation and then we may not have had the trouble we have had?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I am not in the process of passing the buck on this one. The fact is we did not. We now accept that we should have. We started work on it last year but we had a detailed meeting about it yesterday and that is where we are.