

5.10 Deputy M. Tadier of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding delays in the assessment of applicants for the Long Term Care Scheme:

What progress has been made to ensure that any delays in assessing applicants for the long-term care scheme are kept to a minimum, and what is the average delay that applicants currently face?

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

The success of the long-term care scheme means that social work teams have had to deal with an unprecedented increase in demand for care assessments. At the same time, there has been a significant number of existing care packages that required reassessment to establish long-term care funding appropriately. I might surprise the Deputy when I say that we have struggled with introducing this excellent initiative but to manage some of the critical areas of pressure, we have committed active social work input to out-of-hospital services, in other words, to get people back into the community to be helped by Rapid Response, 2 extra social workers to work as part of the hospital discharge team, and last week the Chief Executive authorised the employment of a further 2 social workers to assist with this work in addition to the 3 social workers funded by my colleague at Social Security. Pressure on social workers does remain and we are responding as quickly as we can. But the Deputy is right, we have struggled to meet our commitments.

5.10.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

Can the Minister specifically say what the figures are? So how many remain to be dealt with currently and how does that reflect as a proportion of applications?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I believe that we have currently 44 applicants in what is known as category 1, the high category, and they will be allocated within 18 days. The length of time it takes to carry out an assessment can be less but it is normally about 10 days. We have got 44 in the high category, we have got 44 in the medium category and 15 in the low category at the present time.

5.10.2 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

This is a question I wanted to ask earlier but it is related to social workers in the Health Department. It is to do with the number of clients that Family Nursing have who will have to be assessed when the home care package finishes. I understand that there are 162 clients who are currently not in receipt of long-term care. Really it is reiterating what my colleague, the Deputy of St. Ouen, said earlier about how sure can you be that you have enough social workers in situ to deal with that high number of additional clients?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

The Deputy raises a good point and I believe the figures are somewhat lower than the Deputy has just said and I cannot be absolutely certain but I believe that to be the case. For that very reason, last week we approved the appointment of 2 further temporary social workers on top of the 3 temporary ones paid for by Social Security and on top of the 2 extra that we had already taken on. We are able to appoint without too much difficulty the interim; it is getting permanent staff that are difficult. But in this case we need interims and we are determined to get this work done in that time.

5.10.3 Connétable C.H. Taylor of St. John:

I have a parishioner whose family approached me. They applied for the long-term care in September last year and they still are going through the hoops and have still not received a

single penny towards the very, very expensive costs they are incurring. Would the Minister accept that that is not acceptable?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

It is not but I do not know the circumstances to that case and if the Constable lets me have the circumstances, we will find out whether there is a problem in getting the information needed to carry out that assessment.

5.10.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Can I concentrate on the numbers again? We are talking there about a 100-plus being dealt with, how does that reflect on the total who are already in the long-term care scheme? How many is there? In particular, the expansion into P.C. (Personal Care) level 4 for those who do not qualify for long-term care, there are, for example, 334 people last year on level 3, how many is he expecting to meet the criteria for level 4?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

The truth is, I do not know that at the moment. I just do not understand sometimes when you spot a gap between one system and the other and you bring in a system, or propose to bring in a system, to plug that gap, to support the most vulnerable in our society, you get criticised for that. This is a good-news story. This is about people who just fall below the long-term care scheme being able to access support paid for, if the circumstances are right, by the States. I have no idea yet what the numbers will be; I am waiting for that information.

5.10.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

If I may? I think it is absolutely vital the Minister is aware of the total market that he is trying to reach to know if he is going to succeed or not. He has expressed the hope that he will have this done by January; he has expressed the determination to have this done by January. The fact is, funding from his department will be withdrawn in January. Can he guarantee that sufficient services will be in place, funding will be in place, to guarantee that people in need will not be failed?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I do not think the Deputy is listening to me. We have already allocated extra funding and extra staff to this. We are endeavouring to ensure that we have got it done by January. We will be monitoring our approach to it to see how we are getting on but this is a good-news story, not a bad news. We are going to be supporting people who would not be supported normally, that fall just below that line in the Long-term care scheme. It is going to be administered once the assessments are done by my colleagues in Social Security, a fair, a transparent and appropriate system meeting the needs of those in the community, fulfilling P.82.

5.10.6 Deputy M. Tadier:

Could the Minister give the figures for those who he mentioned on the medium and low bands? He said there were 44 and 15, what are the average processing times for those bands?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

The average processing time for those on high priority, 18 days, and it can take 10 days to do the assessment. Those in hospital waiting for discharge takes 5 days. Those on medium, 83 days, and the very low level assessment triage is 120 days.