

2018.04.09

7 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Social Security regarding the impact of increasing the length of time someone should pay contributions to become entitled to parental benefits: [OQ.62/2018]

Given that more than 70 per cent of respondents to *Living Today: Thinking Ahead Part 2* favoured increasing the length of time someone should pay contributions to become entitled to parental benefits, is it the Minister's assessment that implementing such an increase would worsen financial conditions for new parents and babies and will she explain how such a measure would be consistent with the 1,001 Days initiative?

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

I am very grateful to the 2,600 Islanders who took the time to send in their views on the future of parental benefits as part of our major review of the Social Security Scheme. As the Deputy said, respondents were supportive of having a longer contribution history before making a claim. These views, and the views of the public on bereavement benefits and old age pensions and the work we are doing now on incapacity benefits, will all be considered by the next Minister for Social Security and the next States Assembly. There are difficult decisions to make; how do you balance the 1,001 Days agenda and the needs of new born babies against the needs of pensioners or people living with a disability. Which group is most important? Which one is most deserving of public support? The answer is that they all need our support and that support comes from everyone paying contributions into the fund. This is the reason for the major Social Security review and the results of all the surveys and other research will be brought together to allow the next Assembly to weigh-up these issues, take these difficult decisions and ensure that the Social Security Fund remains sustainable in the long term.

3.7.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Supplementary, if I may. So as a result of all those words has the Minister answered the question? Does she consider that such a move, increasing the length of time required to make contributions, would contradict the initiative that we have currently and the commitment we have to 1,001 Days? Which, in her mind, is appropriate?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

I believe I did answer the question. This is the whole part of having this review and we will collate all the results. The second part, as the Deputy says, has just been released. These are not Social Security recommendations. They are the views of the consultation and the public workshops and so when we collate all these responses we will be able to come up with various suggestions as to how to maintain the sustainability of the fund.

3.7.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Given that the only options in the question were to increase the length of time required for contributions between 2 amounts does the Minister not consider that this, in fact, was a leading question and did not fully consider the pros and cons of such action?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

No, it was not a leading question and, as with all the questions in the consultation, there were 3 options; whether it would be to increase, decrease, not just in the circumstances in this particular thing but all the way through the consultation, or to have things remain as they are at present. The

results, as the Deputy said in his question to me, were that 70 per cent of respondents were keen to increase their history of contribution before receiving the benefit.

3.7.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

I believe the Minister may be in danger of misleading the House accidentally because in this question it was not make the period shorter, keep it the same or lengthen it, it was the shorter option was not there. It was keep it the same or lengthen it by various periods. That was the question and that is, I believe, begging for people to answer that particular aspect and to agree with the statement.

The Bailiff:

Well, that is a comment, Deputy. Is there a question in there?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

The question was: will she check her data to make sure that she is not misleading the House because that would be a shame?

The Bailiff:

Minister, will you go and check your data?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

Yes, Sir.