

4.11 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Social Security regarding the Access to Work scheme: [OQ.5/2018]

Will the Minister inform Members what total sum has been allocated for the first year of operation of the new Access to Work scheme for the disabled and state what the source of this funding is?

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

£100,000 has been allocated to the Access to Work pilot for 2018. The funding has come from the Back to Work budget. Helping people to move into and stay in work is so important and I am proud of the progress made to date by my department, including supporting those with long-term health conditions. This new grant will, however, help more people with a disability and it is absolutely right that we pilot this to develop something that is appropriate for Jersey.

4.11.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

If I may? While obviously welcoming any new initiative that will help people get back into work and live a normal life, can the Minister be more specific and state whether this funding of £100,000 has come from the affected £10 million that she cut from the benefit system, and income support in particular, and would be swamped by the £350,000 that has been saved by changing the disregard on long-term incapacity? Is she not giving with one hand and taking with the other?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

I thank the Deputy for his welcome to the initiative and the answer is no, the budget has come from the existing budget within Back to Work that was used for employment incentives. As part of the M.T.F.P. savings Back to Work have committed to reducing their funding by £2 million. This is part of that funding that is being reduced and will only be for a pilot for this initiative for a year, after which it will be reassessed. It has not interrupted any other budget funding whatsoever.

4.11.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does she then categorically deny that there is any relationship with the £350,000 she saved from changing the disregard to long-term incapacity, talking about those with a disability, and this pales into insignificance when compared to that sum, £100,000 is neither here nor there?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

I am not quite convinced that the Deputy understands the budget allocations. I think I have made it quite clear that it is from an existing budget within Back to Work, it is nothing to do with any long-term incapacity funding whatsoever.