

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 12th NOVEMBER 2019**

Question

Will the Minister update members on the actions taken to implement the findings and results of the consultation 'Living Today, Thinking Ahead' and, in particular, will she advise when she will lodge a proposition to extend the period for which Maternity Allowance can be claimed from 18 weeks to 26 weeks, given this was a proposal that was strongly supported by consultees?

Answer

The results of the consultation "Living Today, Thinking Ahead" were published as [R.25/2018](#).

The findings of the consultation are being acted on as follows:

- Strong support for contributory benefits to continue to include benefits for bereavement and parenting.

No action needed

- Strong support for requiring a longer period of payments into the scheme before benefits can be claimed.
- Eligibility rules for benefits are confusing and particularly difficult for new residents to understand.

These issues will be considered in 2020 as part of the implementation plan in respect of changes to migration policy.

- Some support for a longer period of maternity allowance

As part of the commitment made in the [Government Plan 2020-2023](#), the Minister has acknowledged the need to move to a more family friendly labour market, one which recognises the role of all parents in the care of their children.

In parallel with the Assembly's approval of the "Family Friendly" changes to the Employment Law on October 22nd 2019, in 2020 the Minister intends to make changes to the existing maternity allowance contributory benefit so that both parents will be eligible to receive it. In addition, the length of time this allowance can be claimed will be increased to 32 weeks (shared between the parents). For example, this could allow a mother to claim 26 weeks of allowance and her partner to claim 6 weeks. The proposal to fund these additional weeks from increases in the higher level of employer contributions also reflects the views of the public in their response to the consultation.

The Minister's proposals are described on page 75 of the Government Plan:

Amend the social security scheme to provide benefits to both parents. The contributory benefit system currently only supports a birth mother with a weekly allowance of £216 per week while she is off work caring for a new baby. As part of the Social Security Review, we have acknowledged the need to move to a more family

friendly labour market, which acknowledges the role of all parents in the care of their children.

In 2020, we will make changes to contributory benefits so that both parents will be able to receive parental benefits. This will be funded from two changes to Social Security contributions. We will increase the cap on earnings from £176,000 to £250,000; we will also increase the contributions rate received from employers of higher-earning workers, and high-earning self-employed people, from 2% to 2.5%. These changes are anticipated to generate an additional £3.35 million in 2020.

Subject to Assembly approval of the Government Plan, it is the intention for these changes to the maternity allowance to come into force alongside the revised Employment legislation in the third quarter of 2020. The required legislative changes will be lodged according to this timescale.