

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY I. GARDINER OF ST. HELIER
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 28th FEBRUARY 2022
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 7th MARCH 2022**

Question

“Will the Minister advise what determines the decision on whether the childcare support component is paid directly to an authorised provider or to the families themselves; and will she provide any specific rules or procedures that are in place regarding to whom these payments are made?”

Answer

The Income Support legislation gives the power to make payments from a household's weekly benefit entitlement direct to a third party. This is generally used for the payment of rent, although only a proportion of households require this service.

An administrative decision was taken in 2018 to cease using this power to routinely pay childcare costs directly to providers. It can still be used in cases where the household experiences challenges in budgeting. This decision was taken based on feedback from childcare providers, parents/carers, and administrative staff in Customer and Local Services.

The reason for the administrative change was that the childcare component is in most cases only available to households who are in employment and weekly entitlement is based on the working pattern of the parent/carer. This means that the weekly value of the childcare component can vary when household earnings change, or when there is a change to the hours worked by the parent/carer because of other caring responsibilities, sickness or school holidays. It can cease if a household stops being entitled to Income Support. There will always be a slight administrative delay in these changes being reflected in the Income Support payment system, with the result that childcare providers were receiving inconsistent amounts of payment and faced administrative work in addressing this with parents/carers.

Outside Income Support, working parents/carers will pay their own childcare costs directly, and since the change was made the majority of Income Support households have handled childcare payments themselves without issue. If there are issues with the way this policy affects authorised providers, I am happy to ask officers to liaise with them directly.