

STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY COMMITTEE ON 7th DECEMBER 2004

As Deputy Southern did not allow me to correct a matter of fact, when he refused to give way during his summing up at the end of the Childcare debate last week, I believe it is important to put the following correction on record.

The policy as regards payment of Childcare Allowance where a person's work is interrupted due to sickness or unemployment, is not, as was said by Deputy Southern, limited to two weeks. In fact, the policy is to avoid disrupting the child care place wherever possible. In practice, the allowance is paid for a minimum of four weeks. If, after that period, the person has not returned to or obtained work, the circumstances are reviewed and payment continued where appropriate. This can be for quite a long period, in some circumstances for many months, in cases of severe ill health or where there is good reason for not finding work.

I would also like to remind members that we have been consulting on Childcare support, amongst many other important issues raised whilst developing a new Income Support system and described in R.C.48/2004 'Income Support System.' The feedback to date has been quite supportive of the proposals in that report, that is, providing a childcare component, still linked to work, but extending coverage to necessary periods of training or retraining geared to finding or maintaining work.

The Committee would like to implement that change ahead of the new Income Support system once we are sure that the Education, Sport and Culture Committee's 'Early Education and Childcare Strategy' compliments our financial support policy and has been debated in the States.

The Committee will be discussing this with the Finance and Economics Committee early in the New Year when it hopes to have a better indication of likely additional costs.