



Health and Social Security Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Social Security

Tuesday, 5th May 2020

Panel:

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat of St. Helier (Chair)

Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour (Vice-Chair)

Deputy T. Pointon of St. John

Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier

Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier

Witnesses:

Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier, The Minister for Social Security

Deputy S.M. Wickenden of St. Helier, Assistant Minister for Social Security (1)

Deputy J.M. Maçon of St. Saviour, Assistant Minister for Social Security (2)

Mr. I. Burns, Director General, Customer and Local Services

Ms. S. Duhamel, Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population

[14:40]

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat of St. Helier (Chair):

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Health and Social Security Scrutiny Panel public hearing with the Minister for Social Security. We will introduce ourselves. This is a virtual link so please bear with us. We will ask a series of questions, however what we may do is ask some further questions as time progresses so that it works or flows better. I am Deputy Mary Le Hegarat and I am the chair of this Scrutiny Panel.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour (Vice-Chair):

I am Deputy Kevin Pamplin, and I am vice-chair of this panel.

Deputy T. Pointon of St. John:

I am the Deputy of St. John, Trevor Pointon, and I am a member of the panel.

Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier:

I am Deputy Carina Alves of St. Helier District 2, and I am a member of the panel.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat: We have got an extra member, which is Deputy Southern, but he is currently having I.T. (information technology) issues so he will be joining us shortly. I will move over to the Ministers, Assistant Ministers, and those participating if they could introduce themselves.

The Minister for Social Security:

Thank you, Deputy Le Hegarat. I am Judy Martin and I am the Minister for Social Security.

Assistant Minister for Social Security (1):

Good afternoon, everybody. I am Deputy Scott Wickenden of St. Helier District 1 and I am the Assistant Minister for Social Security.

Assistant Minister for Social Security (2):

Good afternoon, everyone. Deputy Jeremy Maçon of St. Saviour, Assistant Minister for Social Security.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Good afternoon. It is Ian Burns, director of Customer and Local Services.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

We will start then. If there are any further officer that speaks during the course of the public hearing, I would ask them to introduce themselves before they speak in order that the public are fully aware as to who is participating. This session will be run under the normal rules as if we were within the States building. Firstly, I would like to ask the Minister: could you please provide a short breakdown of your current work programme during this crisis?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, since the crisis began, Deputy, there has been lots and lots of work on the new C.R.E.S.S. (COVID-19 Related Emergency Support Scheme) scheme, getting income support forms into a shorter version and much more easier to handle, participating in the co-funded payroll scheme so that could be launched on time on Friday or Saturday I think it was. So things are still going slow. We meet still every Friday and I sent you all the Ministerial Decisions from the first discussions of

12th February to what we have been doing, I can answer more on them if you have got any specifics, where the money is coming from. Worked again across myself and the Minister for Health and Social Services doing the very early weekends of the calling ... agreeing with the G.P.s (general practitioners) to call up people they knew in their surgeries; that was all weekend and then all those people have now got a rescue pack. The Assembly agreed to take some of that money out of the H.I.F. (Health Insurance Fund) last time we sat. The rest of that was for the bigger Health part, which is Health having doctors working directly under them in the hospital, helping with ambulance and things like that. I probably may have forgotten, if any of my Assistants can think of anything else that I imagine that we have been doing to do with COVID, which a lot of other things have been put on hold at the moment.

Assistant Minister for Social Security (1):

That was a good rundown. We have just been trying to make sure that we are helping out as many Islanders as we possibly can through this crisis.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Can we expect any further announcements or legislation to be made by you or your department regarding COVID-19 and if so, what will they be on?

The Minister for Social Security:

I have got at the moment not anything coming up. I do have legislation, and you will be the first to know. I am seriously, seriously, just in the last week, trying to make the right decision for the Family Friendly.

[14:45]

We are nearly there. There are a few ways we can do this - Appointed Day Act and other things - but we want to come to a decision on Friday and as soon as we have that it may be - sorry about the timing - it will not be rushed legislation it will still ... we are aiming for a date but it will want input from this panel. So we will convene a Teams meeting as soon as I know which way this Act is going, if that is okay. But other legislation, because we have got all the C.R.E.S.S. everything else is on ... everything that is not put on hold is still on track, as far as I remember. Did you have anything specific? I can look at all the workstreams here like the ...

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

No, it was asking if there was only going to be any further legislation in relation to the COVID-19; so it was more about that than anything else. During the course of this public hearing we will go over other matters in relation to other legislation but this was more to do with the COVID-19.

The Minister for Social Security:

I do not think so. Ian, we have not got anything coming through, have we? Or Sue?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

No. You mentioned the Health Insurance Fund transfer?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, I did.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

That has gone through obviously.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, thank you. What impact has the pandemic had on your business plan for this year?

The Minister for Social Security:

The department business plan or my policy? I have got a list of policy things that we wanted to do.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, that would be helpful for us to understand.

The Minister for Social Security:

We got to a point of reviewing the Employment Law for annual leave breaks and rest breaks and that went out and we have a report but it is not for public at the moment because we cannot do anything on it. We are working with Health, again this has been affected ... we are supporting Health and Community Services with the adult social care review. I think both of the panels gave you an update probably early January, might have even been as late as February that that was on track. It was on track then, I do not think it is on track now. To support and develop the Jersey Care Model. Again, that is all working on a long ... the bits that are working on are being worked on but again I would imagine that - I cannot talk for their side - but our side that we were working with the G.P.s has not happened. But then again, it might come out that now the G.P.s are working with Health, it might be a really good experience in ways that it can work for the Jersey Health Care model so that might happen. Supporting incapacity benefit review; that is all still ongoing but very, very slowly in the background. That was always going to be a couple of years. The other big one, way off track only because we have not met and it was a tight one, is the financial independence in old age. It could have been a workplace pension but we were already looking at other options. We did the minimum wage, that was fine. We are still supporting the Brexit team in a little bit of a way. That is

just because it could go on ... again, it might not seem to anything here but we may see some shortages of drugs, food. That is really ... I cannot see anymore.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, Minister, thank you for that.

The Minister for Social Security:

That was our list in the Government Plan, which has been knocked a bit for 6 but it is still there and it is on our ...

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

There are a couple of points that I will follow up on but just a reminder to everyone please that we all need to put our cameras on. Otherwise it affects the live feed so everyone please put your cameras on, thank you. You did mention earlier about the parental leave; can you please clarify that this is not going to go ahead in July this year as planned?

The Minister for Social Security:

No, I cannot clarify that, Deputy, because that is what the talks are about. As soon as I know which way it is going to go I said we will come to you. People send me emails and say they have heard a rumour one way or the other and when I ask where from they do not get back to me. We only literally had a good discussion here on Friday and we have been getting emails probably about 2 weeks previous to that. I cannot say more than that. I have asked for some officers to see if they can do something and if they can do something then it will make a different story. I am not trying to be evasive. I wish I could give you the answer today. Hopefully I think we will know the answer on Thursday and it is as near as that, if not it will be Monday and then you will be the first people to know after that before we go public.

Assistant Minister for Social Security (1):

It is something we are talking about at the moment, Deputy, to make sure that we know that we are going to go in one way or another but we are making sure we have got all the statistics and facts and then we are going to make a decision on what we are going to be doing about Family Friendly. Then we will update you as soon as we know what we have decided.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, thank you. Minister, will you be offering any additional support to benefits to parents who give birth after July 2020 above what is already provided?

The Minister for Social Security:

That could be a problem. The answer is probably no because, to get the ducks in a row of already of what we said we can do, it would not work in July. So at the moment not any extra benefits. There are extra benefits that we have promised to come down the line. There was only one that was specifically linked to Family Friendly and the others are doable and completely different legislation. So we could do 2 separately. If that is what the information we get we could do 2 separately but just get the Appointed Day Act in for Family Friendly.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

My final question in this section is: what will be other impacts you can confirm to the best of your knowledge, for example impact to the L.T.C. (long-term care) fund drop in contributions, minimum wage, et cetera, what other impacts can you confirm at this time?

The Minister for Social Security:

You are talking about money coming into the long-term care?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Yes. Obviously what we are interested in is what other impacts there will be in relation to our current situation and as an example we are talking about the L.T.C. fund drop in contributions, minimum wage, et cetera, so what other impacts are you able to confirm, to the best of your knowledge, in relation to what is going on at the present?

The Minister for Social Security:

Obviously we have frozen the first 2 quarters of social security payments for certain companies. So we are receiving no income off some, and it is not compulsory they do not pay it. Ian might have more of a bigger story how much ... it is having a big effect, if that is the answer. But there is money coming in to people who ... and probably I do not know the sort of jobs that are still paying the contributions, which is one of our biggest incomes. Have you got anything to add to that, Ian?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

The Minister is right in the sense that the COVID situation will affect finances of all the funds and obviously the general tax revenues as well. Those will need to be looked at in the round with the need to plan ahead for a recovery out of the COVID period. So at the moment there are a number of things that have already happened, which you are aware of, like the deferral of the first 2 quarter social security contributions, the decision by the States to not transfer the £65 million States grant and a further £5 million also transferred from the Health Insurance Fund. These are things that have happened to help with the overall cashflow and funding of businesses but also government and there will be further developments I am sure in the weeks ahead as we work out with Ministers the right approach to take the Island into recovery.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Are you able to tell us how much has your department spent so far during this crisis, Minister?

The Minister for Social Security:

Do you mean on extra income support or C.R.E.S.S.?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Basically how much has your department spent so far during this crisis, so what basically is extra to what you ... how much have you spent so far during this crisis?

The Minister for Social Security:

The budget for the M.D. (Ministerial Decision) on the C.R.E.S.S. was £730,000 and then it is a general every 100 people cost us £1 million on income support but that is a very general figure. Again, Ian might have the total. I have got the numbers but I have not got the total amounts but we have got an extra over 1,000 people on income support that were not there last month so if you work it on those. As I say, Ian might have the actual figure.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, so there is extra expenditure. Obviously as the Minister said, on C.R.E.S.S. there is £700,000 approximately. On income support then obviously at the moment we have not spent that much because it has only been one month even with the increased numbers but over the rest of the year we would imagine spending additional £8 million roughly over what was budgeted. That may change depending how the co-funded payroll scheme kicks in. But that is an approximation at the moment. Obviously from the Social Security Fund and the Health Insurance Fund and indeed Long-term Care Fund, will have less contributions being paid not only because of the deferral but also because of the economic impact, less people working will pay less in social security contributions, which affects the income of the Social Security Fund and also the income of the Health Insurance Fund.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Do you have an estimated spend for the first half of 2020?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Not to hand, no. But we are looking to reforecast the budget of Customer and Local Services both for resources and also for benefit expenditure but I do not have a figure to hand to give you at the moment, Chair.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Within this figure will you be able to provide us how much of this will be on income support please?

The Minister for Social Security:

What I was going to say, Deputy, to add to, with this small time we have had, we did see quite a few people going on in the first days. It was up to from 30 a week to some days 60 or 70 a day. It dropped right down last week and the co-funded payroll scheme is online and we are hoping to see ... it is not magic money, it is just not income support money. It is money and if people start taking back on their employees they will not be getting both, put it that way. They will not be getting co-funded payroll and they will not be getting income support. The majority will not. There might be one family and one has the job and one has not. So it is hard to say these figures. You need a few more months and the Stats Unit are doing this. Is it something weekly or is it monthly, Ian, to give us all these figures, who is on? We feed them in and so do other departments feed in different things.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, the first weekly update of economic indicators was published on Friday and the Stats Unit are publishing that once a week going forward.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, thank you. What are the estimated losses in regard to your Customer and Local Services special projects within the 2020 to 2023 Government Plan? So what specific projects do you think you will lose out on in relation to what is going on now?

The Minister for Social Security:

The ones that are in the Government Plan that have all gone backwards are the long-term review of the benefits, support and financial independence in old age. It is not the fact there is no money there but we need to see what this looks like, reprioritise, but the majority of them I would still want to go ahead with once we get the big picture and then perhaps reprioritise some of these to be the possible that can be done the easiest and for the less money because some of these are not about the ... support in financial dependency in old age might not need any government money, it was all about people saving for their old age and it could have had a bit of government money to kickstart it. We were getting in seeing some really good schemes from all round the world on that one.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

What impact has the COVID-19 crisis had on the debt within your department?

The Minister for Social Security:

I am going to have to hand this to Ian. I did not think we had any debt.

[15:00]

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

The department itself obviously does not owe any money, Minister, you are quite correct. The deferral of quarter 1 and quarter 2 social security contributions, that obviously will mean that there will be money owed to us, which businesses will be able to use to improve their cashflow, and they will need to repay that to us in 2021. So we will be carrying that first 2 quarters of contributions. That offer is not available to all employers. It is only employers under 80 employees and some have continued to pay us anyway and that is helpful. So we are expecting though perhaps that in the second quarter less employers will be able to pay us to keep that money as cashflow. So we will be carrying over somewhere between £45 million to £70 million worth of the first 2 quarters of contributions into 2021. Obviously the money will still be owed and I am sure that will be looked at by those employers to how they can pay us next year once things have recovered but we will keep a watching brief on that. Of course businesses will still submit their schedules, so that means that we are still notified of when they have collected contributions from their employees so that therefore individuals' contribution records are kept up to date, which means that there is no loss of entitlement to benefit just because an employer has not paid across the first 2 quarters worth of contributions.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

What will be your starting position, Minister, in the Government recovery plan deemed as essential for when you fight the department's corner at the Council of Ministers?

The Minister for Social Security:

I mean the department at the moment, we have looked at the first 2 quarters and we have let employers keep that. Unemployment, I do not want to see too much change under income support. I think it is what it was and there will be pressure to make it more generous or less generous. That will happen. I am of the middle ground that it is okay. So what other things are on the list? I cannot really ... we are starting the what does it look like feeding up from the bottom tomorrow in C.O.M. (Council of Ministers) and it will not be done in 2 hours that we are allocated or 3 hours. There is nothing I want to lose in the department. The department is well run but we will have the usual questions about social security ceiling. Nothing is off the table, if you know what I mean. All these questions will come in as well. Did you have anything specific more that you wanted? I have been very general because we have not had this big talk yet, Deputy.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

We just wanted to know what was your starting position in relation to your department when the recovery plan was being talked about and what you would be fighting for effectively?

Assistant Minister for Social Security (1):

We know that when we come around the back end of this there is going to be a recession. We know it is going to be hard for businesses and Islanders alike, which means Social Security is going to be more vital going forward than it ever has been before because we are going to have to help more people and we are going to get less income because of the recession. I think our starting position right now is that we are a vital service that is there to help the Islanders. Most of the things we do in Social Security are to do with statutory requirements, so it is like paying out income support and it is discrimination and it is all sorts of areas. I would say our position to start with is we have got very little fact to give.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Thank you for that. Moving on now to my last , which is homelessness. According to an ITV report from Friday, 24th April, the Jersey Shelter Trust has seen 34 new people arrive since 10th April. How is the Government of Jersey working with charities, such as Shelter, to assist those made homeless during this crisis? Backed on to that, the trust chair, Neville Benbow, identified a number of these as seasonal workers. Is the C.R.E.S.S. scheme enough to prevent more seasonal workers from being made homeless?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, if it is applied right. I have had the whole figures updated for me. I did see that article. I was a bit gobsmacked because they said they had been put on the street, they had no food and no income and obviously some had not heard of C.R.E.S.S. Now, we have discovered maybe because we all call it C.R.E.S.S. nobody understands it is money for people who have not been here for 5 years, and that is not what C.R.E.S.S. spells so we are having a think about that. The Shelter have been brilliant. It was just one person at Shelter, that has got sorted. The way the homelessness, and Carina was there on Friday, we had Richard Jouault, who is now on the housing team with Jack Norris and works for Sam basically, but it is the support housing team in the coronavirus and told us there is a 136 people, 13 of them have been rehoused in Andium full-time and I said I think ... I asked if there had been any clusters because we made the scheme 1, if you are employing somebody, they were living in your accommodation, you could not apply for scheme 1 if you chucked them out. It is exactly the same under scheme 2; it is there in big, bold writing, and you cannot apply for scheme 2 if you are housing them and you chuck them out. So 136 people out of thousands and thousands of tenants they were very pleased with. Some of them are going to be, sorry to say it, Deputy, tenants that they have housed once, they've housed again, and they're just in a small guesthouse and they are not coming in or they are having parties in the room and they are finding about, out of the 136, 4 or 5 are challenging, that is all I can say. So, yes, they are in with it. They meet every day. That group meets with Shelter. This is the report. I would not have known this if

he had not had offers to come to talk to the community team but we get a good speaker in every Friday and it was Tom Wherry the week before on repatriation and the difficulties of that. But, I think it is really working well. That is the amount of people we have got out there. There was not any big clusters. I said: "Was it one big hotel chucked 12 people out or 15?" No. They were all odd ... and it was before anybody knew about any rights really. They were just told: "You have not got a contract, you are renting a room." A lot of them were, sadly to say, back of house rooms. And why not? People are going to go: "I do not really want a stranger here now." You are not going to get the money. We are going to get you out quickly, that is what they did. But there is a lot more information out there now and they have seen a very, very slow down to it. So that is what they reported to us on Friday.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, thank you. I noticed that Deputy Southern has managed to get in so I will move over to Deputy Southern who is going to ask questions in relation to the T.O.M. (target operating model) and loss of face-to-face interaction.

Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier:

You have just gone through a T.O.M.s process. Was that affected by the pandemic outbreak or have you managed to succeed and save £0.7 million?

The Minister for Social Security:

Ian can answer that but our T.O.M.s completely finished just at the last Scrutiny hearing but Ian can elaborate on that, if he wants.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, no problem at all. Thank you, Minister. So the C.L.S. (Customer and Local Services) target operating model changes happened in 2019 and all the changes affecting individuals were completed within the year. In 2020 much of that had been implemented and we were continuing to move to the new model through staff training and like. But all the actual structures were in place and we were hoping to make good progress in 2020 moving to the actual improved services that underpin those target operating model changes. Some of that you can see. The library, we started opening up obviously longer hours, we had more resources in the office of the superintendent registrar and also in the benefit areas we are starting to move towards a work and family hub, a pensions and care hub and a business hub that would mean that the customer would need to speak to fewer people to get a more holistic service in the long run. That was all well under the plan and obviously the COVID situation has meant that some of that, some of the training that is in place has stopped because we have had to pick up other services and also deal with unprecedented levels of

customer demand in relation to income support and C.R.E.S.S. and other benefits and the payroll scheme.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

How will the workforce be affected by the loss of face-to-face interactions? It appears to be taking phone calls only.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, you are quite correct, Deputy. Since the social distancing rules meant that we needed to remain 2 metres apart, it made it very difficult to have face-to-face conversations with members of the public. So, regrettably, I took the decision to close the offices to face-to-face meetings with customers and we switched resources then to only be on the telephone. I have to say that the teams in Customer and Local Services have been absolutely brilliant. They responded really well to the changes. We have deployed our business continuity plan, which means we now have, effectively, 3 teams, 3 groups of colleagues, one based in La Motte Street, another group based in Eagle House and a third group working from home. This has meant that should we get hit with the coronavirus ourselves, we would still be able to provide a service and it would not take out all areas of the department. That has worked really well. We have social distancing in the office and, again, people have shown a great of flexibility and willingness to help out different areas as we have had demand come in. That is quite right too because, of course, we are helping people answer questions and provide monetary support to people who are worse off in the community and that is what we are here to do. We are here to serve the public, so it has been really positive to have that response.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Would you say that the workload has increased for your staff?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

We have seen overall a tremendous increase in activity, yes. As you would appreciate, 1,000 income support claims in just over a month would never have been dreamt of at the start of the year in terms of planning. The fact that we have been able to get payments made really quickly to the public has been a fantastic team effort to get the system in place, to get the online form in place and to get new processes and steps to make sure that money gets paid out, so that of all the other things people have to worry about, having access to the financial safety net is not one of them.

The Minister for Social Security:

Are we, C.L.S. not also now doing payroll 1, payroll 2 and were you not triaging the 445566 number? It is the community group can go through there as well, which I lead on. On one day on one of those lines - it was 16th March, you told me - over 2,000 phone calls were all answered. I think it was the

corona line and community. These are people looking for help, practical as well, Deputy Southern: “Where can I get somebody to do a bit of shopping?” and all this as well. So there is a lot of activity going on down there, but do not get me wrong, it is not all the original staff. Ian Burns has pulled in lots of staff across.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

That was going to be my next question. How many people have had you had to drag in extra from elsewhere in the public sector?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

This has been quite fluid. To begin with we moved lots of our Customer and Local Services teams to support the coronavirus helpline, 445566, because that is where there was obviously high levels of demand in the beginning. We had the expertise to run telephony centres and had the line management structures to make sure that people were trained quickly and to get things in place. So we were able to support the small number of Health colleagues who were acting on that line to begin with and it rapidly expanded to 20-plus people, having those sorts of volumes of calls that the Minister mentioned and operating also 7 days a week, 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. Then, of course, as we saw demand switch, the helpline started to drop a bit but we had more claims coming in, we started to move the staff back into the benefit processing areas and found colleagues from across government who could help staff up the helpline and trained them to help support that advice line for the public.

[15:15]

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Can you give me a figure for how many people you have had to draft in to cope with the load?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

No, it is quite a difficult figure, Deputy, to give you that answer because, as I say, it has changed every week where the resources have been. We have been out to get some very specific resources who can handle benefit claims, who used to work in the department. We have brought some of those in to help us out. That is probably a handful of people who we have got in who could hit the ground running because they had worked in the department before and helped us particularly with the benefit processing areas. It is more about we have moved staff who have some experience internally on to that as we have taken them off the helpline. It is not a straightforward answer to be able to say it is 10 people or it is 15 people. The helpline now is pretty much staffed by people who are not part of Customer and Local Services, of the benefit areas. There are colleagues from elsewhere in cross-government who are now operating that coronavirus helpline on 445566.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Can I just return to the unemployment figures that you are coping with? I believe the figures suggest that on 26th April we had an extra approximately 1,200 people actively seeking work compared with the equivalent week in 2019, and that means something like 700 extra income support claims supporting 8,000 adults and 3,000 children. What would be the cost over the year of that extra demand if it continues?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

The current estimate for income support would be an additional £8 million. That is an estimate because we are obviously hoping that the co-funded payroll scheme, the second phase, will support a number of people who have come into claim to be re-employed with their employer. We are hoping that will change but it is too early to tell whether that will be as successful as we hope.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

If you look at the spend over the year, a relatively small amount is being laid out in C.R.E.S.S. Is there any reason why you should not make C.R.E.S.S. a little more generous because there is no contribution to rent in there and obviously that causes a great deal of hardship for many?

The Minister for Social Security:

When we were going into this, the higher priorities of the Council of Ministers were to keep people in work as much we can, keep them paid, medicines and then we had to look at the under 5 years. There were options and there were options. So we went away and this is the C.R.E.S.S. It never was going to have rent in there. It is money for adults, money for children and we are also in contact with Mark Rogers in C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills). If they feel any of the children need extra, it is never a problem. So it is a short-term scheme for 3, 4 months from start to finish. A lot of these people have not been here 6 months, some of have been here under 5 years, Deputy. Some will be moving on to income support, just because of the fact of however long this takes we are not freezing it. If you have done your 4½ years and at some time in the future you are still in income support, you become an income support person, you are not frozen. It is one of those that we thought was about right. It was something that I had to get through the Council of Ministers. It was easy in the end. I do not know if I had gone much higher it would have been easy but they thought for a short-term scheme it was about right.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Rent is surely one of the biggest expenses for any worker in Jersey. What consideration did you give to including some sort of rental contribution in this particular benefit?

Assistant Minister for Social Security (1):

What we looked at, Deputy, was that the 6 months and under people that fit into the C.R.E.S.S., the ones that would need support because they are not in the finance sector or some other area that is a well-paid area in our economy, would have staff accommodation. The idea was that they will not be able to be thrown out of their staff accommodation, which means that there is no rent component there. The idea of C.R.E.S.S. was to give money so they can buy food and those things that are essential because they will have accommodation through employers.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

When I asked how many people had tied accommodation, I was told that that information was not recorded. There are no numbers in terms of how many people have lost their accommodation as a result of what has happened to them.

Assistant Minister for Social Security (1):

It is something we could review when we get more statistics, but at the moment we took the decision to go down the route we did until we get further information.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Have you given any exceptional payments towards any of these people because of hardship they may have reported?

The Minister for Social Security:

From memory, no, and I would have made a Ministerial Decision. I think you are talking loans. From memory, nobody has come to me. It might have been done at operational level because it is a loan now not a grant. Ian may know but from memory nobody has mentioned it.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

The only Ministerial Decision in relation to people who have been here less than 5 years that the Minister has signed recently is support for repatriation. I think it is about 25 people who we supported to return back to their families.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Have people been able to leave the Island and return back to their families?

The Minister for Social Security:

No. We had a report from Tom Wherry in External Relations. Again, that was on my community group. Carina was there. The basis is that there are desperate people who want to get back to, let us say, Romania, Poland and there was another country, and the talks they were having with those

countries was: "No, we would not take people back from there because they are in a safe community and they are getting money." They are not worried about those people. There are certain people that they are worried about, their own country's folks stuck in some really bad places - this is the what he told us - and it will be them first and us never probably. When the borders open they will have them back. It was a nice thing to hear that they are not worried because they absolutely look at them being in Jersey as a safe place. That is what he said.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Returning to the previous answer you gave, when might you know how many people are in tied accommodation or otherwise in this particular sector who are receiving C.R.E.S.S.?

The Minister for Social Security:

The bigger picture is C.R.E.S.S. is probably quite a few. Some will be in lodgings. The big picture is, which we will know ... and the last one, the payroll scheme 1 and payroll scheme 2. It is not in the small print. Me and Ian Burns stamped our foot, or my foot. It is in there. If you have got tied accommodation you cannot claim the scheme if you are putting those people out on the street on both schemes. So we can probably get you some better figures on that, because it is a much bigger scheme, Deputy, if that is what you want. We would be able to collect that, would we, Ian?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

I would have to go and see. We did not have the information last week or a couple of weeks ago when I think the Deputy asked the question. I am not sure with C.R.E.S.S. C.R.E.S.S. is meant to be a simple scheme for 3 months.

The Minister for Social Security:

No, I am not talking about C.R.E.S.S. here. I am talking about payroll scheme 1. C.R.E.S.S. is a much smaller scheme, I understand that. Payroll scheme 1, we would probably know the company, know if they had accommodation. It might take a bit of a jiggle to get it around but I am sure we could possibly get that information on the big payroll schemes.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

We can have a look at payroll 1.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

780 businesses, which covers about 6,000 employees, claimed funding under phase 1 and £1.7 million, according to the Statistics Department has been paid out under the scheme so far. Do you think that is likely to increase?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes. The payroll 2 scheme is going to be massive. That only went for 10 days, Deputy Southern. This one is going to run for 3 months and it includes a lot more people in it who are eligible to go in it. That is why that might look small but we are hoping it is going to be thousands of employers and even some employers whose employees are on income support will take them on the payroll scheme. It is more money for them, especially if there are 2 of them working in different companies getting the payroll scheme and if they are ever getting income support because a certain amount of their wage is being paid. That is why it is a dear scheme to the Government but it will keep people open, hopefully, instead of going not open.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is C.L.S. responsible for processing all those claims on phase 2?

The Minister for Social Security:

The answer is yes. Ian Burns' face did not move when I said yes because he did not hear me, I was muted, but it is correct. It is C.L.S. running both payroll schemes, C.R.E.S.S., income support, and have I missed anything? Correct, Ian? That is all you, is it not?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, that is correct. The one thing I was trying to add is that the payroll schemes are that any employee could be claimed for by the employer as long as they are in an appropriate sector, et cetera, and the other rules of the scheme. So this means that it does not matter how long you have been on the Island for. An employer can claim for people who have been here 6 months, 3 months, 10 years, 20 years. It supports a wide cross-section of the workforce as opposed to the benefit system is different in that sense.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

When phase 2 is up and running, are you confident that you will not have an increase in waiting times to get claims processed? Are you still confident that you could deal with that with your current workforce?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well, we started on Friday. You do it, get the numbers exact.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

We are managing the resources to make sure that we can support the public on both counts. The number of income support claims we have been receiving has been dropping. It probably peaked in the middle of April and has been dropping. It is still high compared to normal but it has been

dropping and to help with the payroll scheme, as it is a brand new scheme, we have been able to get some colleagues from other parts of Government to help us out with some of the volume for that. Hopefully the major peak of processing for the payroll will be in the first couple of weeks of each month. We have been able to co-opt some people in, so I am confident that we will be able to do both. What the Minister was referring to was that on Friday we had over 1,000 claims from employers, which is more than the first phase 1 of the scheme. Of course businesses claim based upon what they have paid, so they would have paid employees in April and they would claim based upon what they have paid people. So, having all the 3 schemes under the same department for administrative purposes does mean, of course, that it helps with our controls and our quality control. Also we can ensure that payments are being accounted for in the right way across the 3 different schemes, so that if somebody is being paid for by an employer we can make sure that any benefit claim is reflected in the same way.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Okay, that is me done for the moment.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

What effect has the lockdown had on the type of claims and services being requested by Islanders? Obviously we have heard about income support and the C.R.E.S.S. but has there been a reduction in applications for certain claims or services?

The Minister for Social Security:

That is not one I have thought about or even been advised on. Have you got anything specifically? I know we have the loans. Say someone moves, we could have the loans for whitegoods or carpets and things. Very few people are moving. There was a couple of movements permanently into Andium that we heard about on Friday. But it has not come to the Ministers so I would say if there is it has been very small because it is not something that Ian or Sue or anyone has highlighted to us. If anyone on the line has got any more information, or did you have some specific thing that I did know about, if you know what I mean?

[15:30]

Deputy C.S. Alves:

No, I have not got a specific answer. It was just in general if there had been any changes, any effect on the type of claims.

The Minister for Social Security:

The scheme now for the over-65s and the dental and that, I would imagine that is just not happening at the moment because we have got no dentists. I cannot think of anything specific other than that.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

We have probably seen less activity from the Control of Housing and Work (Jersey) Law perspective in terms of registration cards. Obviously people are not changing jobs or moving house in the same way, so we have probably seen less activity, probably less income from those sources, for example. Also with fewer people coming to the Island, applying for business licences to trade would have also dropped. The other one, for all the reasons that you will be aware of in terms of the pandemic effect, is that probably fewer people have been signed off sick or gone to the doctor.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay, thank you. Are you expecting a rise in any applications for certain claims or services over the coming months? This could be post-COVID or while COVID is still happening. We have heard from you, Ian, earlier that there has been a drop in the income support claims recently, that there was that initial increase. How would you be preparing for this?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Just to clarify, the income support claims are still going up but just by a lesser amount. We hope it will, of course, drop. The point I suppose I was making earlier was about the payroll scheme. It may mean that some people might get re-employed by their employers. I think the major thing post in recovery would be helping support people into work through back to work. That will be the major impact, I suggest, when the economy starts to recover.

The Minister for Social Security:

There is Jeremy on the line. There might be some industries that do not ... they will survive but there might not be as many of them, so perhaps a bit more reskilling and how we do that. I do not know until I know the ages of the people and what the industry is going to look like out there. It is good that we get this information across departments.

Assistant Minister for Social Security (2):

Skills Jersey, which is more education, is already undertaking that type of work, that scoping review to see where the demands are. We are anticipating a recession. To answer the chairman's question at the very beginning about what other programmes Social Security may be looking at, it will be that skills piece jointly with educationalists to look at how we can support people through a recovery.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Thank you. What targets have you set for your department regarding the preservation of living standards for Islanders, particularly those who needed help before COVID-19? What details can you provide on this?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well, we might not always agree. Income support is a safety net. Ever since I have been Minister it has gone up yearly. It went up separately last year. If you were working you would get a bit more and if not it went on to the components. Do you mean living standards as on income support or getting people more skilled up and doing different work so that they did not need income support? In an ideal world, people would be able to live on the wages that they earn. Some people can live on a certain wage and another family might get exactly the same money and not be able to live on it. That is the bigger picture question that myself and the Council will need to be having: what will it look like? It cannot be just one department either. Again, it is very general. If you want to ask me something drill-down specific, I have no problem trying to answer it, but if it was meant to be a general question, that is fine.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Yes, it was fairly general. Moving on to contributions, what strategies are you developing to compensate for the deferral of social security contributions by businesses?

The Minister for Social Security:

To help them out, to get some money in the pocket, which we knew they had in January, February, March and then obviously April, May, June, it is deferred. It is looking like we definitely will not get this ... well, we will not. I think we have now made an agreement to look at getting it back in 2021. Again, we will have a rough idea of what that looks like until the actual COVID goes through and see how the economy picks up, because contributions are always paid on a wage, how much the last 2 quarters will possibly bring in or not. But if you are asking am I drastically changing anything at the moment, I have not even had a discussion about the amount of contributions.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

So you have not got any sort of idea of how you are going to compensate for that deferral of contributions at the moment? That is still something that you are looking into?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes. We are hoping to get them. The first 3 months should have been fairly normal. I know March looked a bit different towards the end but everything was fairly okay in January, February and most of March but not the same in April, May and June. Then, as I say, if they pick up lovely in the ... it will be a deferral and it will be a bad year but it will not be catastrophic. It could just be a bad year.

Ian might want to add. If it worked like that, it would be a bad year. If the last 2 quarters are decimated too and really nobody is bringing in anything, it is easy to defer, it is even worse to defer nothing. We have not done anything yet. We are just hoping it does pick up. Ian, would you like to add to that?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

You are absolutely right, Minister. The F.P.P. (Fiscal Policy Panel) forecast that employment would probably drop by about 6 per cent and if that is correct that would mean about 6 per cent of people would be paying fewer contributions, they will not be paying any contributions, and so that is the sort of number that factors through into a reduction anyway of people being able to pay contributions. Then you have got the deferment as well, which then means the cash we would have got is received next year. The Social Security Fund is well placed, despite the equity falls that we saw at the start of the COVID period. The fund is probably back to 2017 levels, so it is still in a good place. It still has got nearly 6 times the amount of money it pays out, which is a very good level of coverage - it is not just a pension fund - for a pension fund like this.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Do you expect the social security contributions to return to normal rates in the next few years or can we expect further issues regarding the sustainability of this fund?

The Minister for Social Security:

We have got a little bit in the business plan and that was for benefits, but again, we are having this big picture story. I think you are asking 2 separate questions. I think you are asking will we have to put the rates up because this year is going to be so bad, a catch-up rate. I do not know. I am not hearing that because of what Ian says. We do have a really good £1 billion Social Security Fund and it can take a little bit of a hit. If going forward we find out that we need more for doing this, that and the other and changing things, that is a big picture story that we are going to have to sit down with the Council of Ministers, bring in Assistant Ministers and talk to Scrutiny rapidly because everyone wants this exit plan and what the world will look like after COVID done quickly, and I can see that. Do not forget we did have a Government Plan that we all sweated over, either getting it together or scrutinising, and now it might not be the same or you have to pick some priorities out of it and still fund them in maybe different ways.

Assistant Minister for Social Security (1):

We are not seeing anything in the picture right now that tells us that we are going to have make any decisions on that basis right now, but it is very early days. Until we know how many people lose their jobs, how many people are going to be relying on income support and how much that is going to cost in the long run, we are not really going to have a good picture about whether we are going

to have to make any changes. But I am sure as the months go on and this carries on, we will get a much better picture about what is going on. Of course, we cannot take anything off the table but right now we are not seeing anything that says that we would have to do any drastic measures right now because of how healthy the fund is.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Thank you. My next set of questions is on the payroll schemes. How many applications were received for phase 1 of the Government's co-funded payroll scheme?

The Minister for Social Security:

It was about 500 companies and over 7,000 workers, but Ian has got them to the top of his ...

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes. In the economic indicators that were published on Friday there were 780 businesses that had claimed for 5,900 employees and that includes self-employed people as well. At that stage, £1.7 million had been paid out. Phase 1 covered the last 12 days of March and was also limited to a much smaller range of sectors, in tourism and hospitality for example. So it was a straightforward scheme and it paid out for the 12 days a maximum amount of £342, which is roughly about £200 a week. It was a much smaller scheme in terms of scope, the amount of money being paid, but it was put into place very quickly to provide support for those sectors that Ministers felt were being hit the hardest. The second scheme is a much bigger range of sectors, it is a larger amount and has a much greater financial value attached to the 3-month scheme.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Just picking up on what you mentioned there, do you believe that the scheme has accomplished what it set out to do or how do you believe it could be improved?

The Minister for Social Security:

I think the other one, the first scheme which was very small and, as Ian has just said, very limited to industries because it was industries that literally were shut down, worked well. Other than that, I do not know all the incomes of the partners but we have got 5,900 people that were helped, so just imagine that all down on social or C.R.E.S.S. and the split would be obviously more income support because of just the name of ... we have got a lot more people here over 5 years. We hope to see that is what the scheme is. Although we are helping businesses, we are keeping business working, we want to keep their employees employed, if they can do bits of work. I am so glad we have not gone down the furlough scheme where they are being paid to sit at home and they are not liking it. There are other jobs they could be doing in the U.K. (United Kingdom). They are crying out for other jobs but people are being told: "You are on that scheme" or other work. That scheme was only up

in 10 days and it covered 5,900 people. There is, what, 50,000 people, Ian? Could it be as many as 50,000 people?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

I think there is 56,000 people who are working. It is due to cover about 27,000 out of those.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Sorry, is that still phase 1 or are we talking about phase 2?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Phase 2.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Do you know how many applicants you have had so far from phase 2?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Shall I jump in there, Minister?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes. It is 1,000.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, it is 1,000. On Friday we had 1,000 as the scheme opened.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

What do you think is the estimated total spend for phase 2?

The Minister for Social Security:

We do not know what it will be but we have got a budget for it. The budget for the first 3 months - eye-watering and this figure has changed - is it £186 million or is it a little bit more now, Ian?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

I think that might be the 5-month value, Minister. It is £138 million for the first 3 months.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Thank you. If COVID-19 resurfaces either later on in the year or in 2021 and results in further lockdowns, can we expect the scheme to be replicated or will a different strategy be taken by the Government of Jersey?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well, now that is a very interesting question. When lockdowns and when COVID disappears, maybe for the first time there is going to be a lot of look back in 20:20 vision and have some good ideas.

[15:45]

There may be better ways to do this. That is a very hard question to answer because once we start looking at it ... and do not forget these were schemes that had to be put in quickly. I have never seen myself move so quickly and I never thought I would see money going like this so quickly, but they were needed then. I am sure they will be needed and they might need tweaks and it might work a different way. That will be the discussion hopefully you can have when it goes completely and praying it is not coming back but have all your tools in the toolkit ready on day one, and that is the only way we ... we would have to be more prepared, would we not? We could not say it happened 100 years ago in 1918 or 1919, like everyone did. It did happen 100 years ago but we did not really think it was coming our way.

Assistant Minister for Social Security (1):

I think I would say this scheme, of all the schemes we have done, has always been about supporting people. Despite all the popular ideas that we are there to support businesses, it was not. These schemes were put in place to make sure that people had money in their pocket or they stayed in their jobs and everything. If we go into a full lockdown again I am sure our priorities will not change, which is we will definitely have to be looking at something, because it is about keeping people in a safe place, keep them in their jobs, keep them in a secure and safe environment. I know from my point as the Assistant Chief Minister we would be looking to keep on with that policy if we had to go into a full lockdown again. It is just how we would afford it would be the next question.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Picking up on something you said there about helping people, these 2 schemes are not compulsory schemes and because they are not compulsory I am sure others may have heard similar stories where people have been made redundant and maybe rules have not been followed. The Employment Law comes under your remit as well, does it not, Minister? Has anybody been in contact with the department about that? I think there is probably quite a lack of awareness about what people are entitled to and what processes should still be followed. I know I had a couple of constituents over the weekend who have got permanent contracts and their employers are not applying for the phase 1 or phase 2 and they have not been given redundancy pay, for example. They have just been told: "You are left out of work." Has the department had anybody get in contact with them with similar issues? Is this something that is being picked up on?

The Minister for Social Security:

We have had the proper reporting of the number. We have had some people say: "If we have to look at redundancy we will look at people who have been here less than a certain amount of time and they will not need the support." I have been asked by other Ministers do I want to really have a good look at the Employment Law at the moment and I do not. J.A.C.S. (Jersey Advisory and Conciliatory Service) is getting those calls and being overworked. That is the other thing, at the end of this we need to make sure there is proper support for the tribunals who are going to hear it, if there are all these cases, that they are there. We had that report and I just signed an M.D. and that will be out soon on the Employment and Discrimination Tribunal. At the moment people are trying to ... as you say, it is not compulsory. People always think: "Is it worth me getting on this scheme whereas I have a couple of workers and it will suit me not to do anything?" Whatever part of the law they are under, as long as they are doing it right ... it is under a year, is it not, and a certain amount of people? They do not necessarily have to report to me but I think Sue is on the line and she is very good on the Employment Law, but I am sure that is right. We are not hearing much.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Just 2 points to jump in on. The first is in phase 2 of the co-funded payroll scheme, Ministers expect businesses to pay 20 per cent towards people's wages but a business can apply for a special exemption if they can prove they do not have the cash to pay their 20 per cent, which means that the employees can receive 80 per cent of their wages up to the limit of the scheme without the employer contributing anything. Where an employer has decided not to take part in the scheme, they are, in effect, saying to their employees that they will not apply to the scheme to get them 80 per cent of their wages. That change was introduced I suppose about a week or so ago by the Council of Ministers in response to businesses who said they were worried about the fact they could not afford to pay their 20 per cent. Obviously it is a much simpler scheme if you can pay 20 per cent. It is better for your employees as well in terms of income, but that is a change that I know businesses are aware of because many of them, of course, have been asking for it. The other point to mention is that we are aware of a couple of businesses that have gone insolvent and that is where the normal employment legislation or the normal notice periods and redundancy payments will not have taken place because businesses are effectively insolvent. But there is an insolvency scheme that falls under the Minister for Social Security that will, of course, kick in to support those individuals and in the meantime anyway income support exists and C.R.E.S.S. exists for anybody while those payments are waited for.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Picking up, because you mentioned C.R.E.S.S. again, and I know that Deputy Southern asked a few questions on that but did we get numbers on how many applications have been received for C.R.E.S.S.?

The Minister for Social Security:

Was it not 380 and that is dealing with so many adults and children? It was definitely 380 applications but I think that covers ... I will get there in a minute. There is so much information.

Director, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

I can help with that if you like.

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, please, Sue.

Director, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

In the economic report that was issued by Stats there were 280 claims altogether in the week of 26th April - it is a week-by-week-benefit - that covered 360 adults and 60 children.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay, great. Thank you. Is this the number that you expected?

Director, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

The scheme was set up to cover 400 people, so that is about right, yes.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

The income support claims, if I am correct, can be backdated. Does that apply to the C.R.E.S.S. applications as well? I am hearing of people who are only learning about the C.R.E.S.S. scheme after being unemployed and not receiving anything for a couple of weeks, up to 2, 3, sometimes 4 weeks.

The Minister for Social Security:

Income support is dated the day you go in or first apply and so is C.R.E.S.S., when you find out about it, so they are both based on the same thing. As long as you know, you might need, in the old days, to provide a bit more for income support or whatever you needed. It might take 2 or 3 weeks. It is not taking that now but the day you apply, if it took longer - the officers will correct me - neither of them is backdated. It is from the day you apply, so it might take 2 weeks to get it but you will get it from the day you apply. I think that applies to both schemes.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

I will pass on to Deputy Pamplin. Thank you.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Thank you, Deputy Alves, and thank you, Minister for your time today. I also thank all your staff and your team for all the work they have put in. I think Ian summed it up best when he said back in January had we known then what was coming are very different places. We would also pay tribute to the front line staff who have to deal with members of the public in very challenging times in their personal lives and how difficult that would have been in what we call normal times but now challenging times. So I pay tribute to all our front line staff who are on the phones currently and just hope that their mental health is being supported. I do not think it is a surprise you hear me say that. I just want to go back quickly and pick up, and before I do we are obviously, as expected - and we found this with our first quarterly hearing with the Minister for Health and Social Services - running very over. Will you, Minister, and officers be available for an extra 15 minutes so we can extend to a 2 hours, 15 minutes meeting? Is that okay?

The Minister for Social Security:

I am. I do not know about officers, and probably Scott and Jeremy. I did say to officers ... definitely the 2 hours is fine.

Assistant Minister for Social Security (2):

Funnily enough, I have got nowhere else to be.

The Minister for Social Security:

I am sure we will be fine. Just plough on and if somebody has to go because they have got another meeting we will just deal with it. Okay, thank you.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

That is great. Thank you. I just want to pick up on some questions earlier in terms of possible delays to benefit payments. Have there been any delays because of the operational challenges that you outlined, Ian, in terms of bringing staff in and setting up, retraining, getting telephone lines in place, getting people up to speed with understanding this ever-changing, very fast period we find ourselves in? Have there been any operational delays and do you foresee any in the future?

The Minister for Social Security:

Did you direct that to Ian?

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes, I was picking up on what he said earlier.

The Minister for Social Security:

I would have just said no, because there might be one in the 100 that people do pick up on, but Ian can give you the proper ... no, they have been fantastic. Some claims have only been open and shut and money in the bank within 3 days, but Ian can tell you that as well, or what Ian feels like he can tell you. Ian, are you around?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes. We switched to a different process in advance of expecting to get higher volumes of claims and that was also based upon the fact we had to close the office and, therefore, our normal process would not function properly. Those 2 things together have meant that we switched to a new process and this has meant that we have been able to deal with income support claims, for example, in a very different way and that has meant that I am very pleased that we have not had claims outstanding for more than a few days throughout the whole period. Like today, for example, we just literally have got like a day's worth, a couple of days' worth maybe, that are waiting to be paid out. With the payroll scheme, we are paying claims out very quickly. With C.R.E.S.S. it is slightly different. We pay out claims once a week because it is a very simple scheme but again we do not have an outstanding number of people who are waiting to have their claims processed. In doing this, of course, we accept that probably some of our previous processes, which were designed to ensure that we do the appropriate level of investigation and have the appropriate controls in place, have been relaxed. We are looking at other ways in which we can perhaps revisit claims once things are on a better footing, so we can check up on some of the evidence that we would normally require from people to make a claim. We still have some good, thorough checks in place and obviously we do know a lot about people, so we have that in our advantage. Having a single benefit agency on the Island, we can do that and the payroll scheme adds to that in some respects in terms of our up-to-date awareness of people's payments and how much income they are getting.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

That is really helpful. Picking up on something you just said there leads me into my line of questioning. The thing that this pandemic has shown the entire world is that there are things that you put in place very quickly to help people. That is what we are all doing. That is what is going on. You discover that going forward this is a good way of working. You talked there about the risks, but have you identified that this is a better process or we have learnt and discovered that this is a quicker and better process going forward? What are the lessons you have learnt through this process, that you see coming out of this in the new normal that we are all going to go through, that going forward we could carry on?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

You are absolutely right. I think there have been quite a few things that have taken place operationally that we would wish to retain. We have had online sickness claim forms for people who are self-isolating. We have had the online income support form, a different process for that, and some really good things on the payroll phase 2, which are happening in the background but are quite exciting. So we will be, of course, looking to retain the best things of those and with a bit more time to develop some of them further they could become even better. I think the public will hopefully also be able to benefit from returning their tax form online, for example. A number of these things will hopefully mean that people will start to use that channel more effectively going forward. The Government should have more online services, for example, just to pick out one example, going forward that are more convenient for the customer and that is ultimately a good thing.

[16:00]

We are quite lucky in Jersey in the sense that we are in town, many people can access our government buildings and the one front door, but it would be better for them if they could do things online in the first place. We might be using this to make that shift because I am sure the public, once they are used to dealing with things online, will not want to go backwards.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

That is great stuff. Thank you, Ian. Minister, during a public hearing with the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel on 23rd April, the Minister for Treasury and Resources, and obviously your predecessor, suggested that the States of Jersey could lift the cap on social security contributions or change how long-term care is funded. You said earlier that everything is on the table and during a crisis of course we have to all operate in different ways with different solutions and different ideas, because we are facing different challenges. What is your thinking at this stage? Give us an insight, because that is obviously quite a bold statement from the Minister for Treasury and Resources going forward. What is your thinking? What is your response?

The Minister for Social Security:

I think we said this in the Government Plan, and Ian will correct me because I have not got these big figures in front of me but from memory we moved the cap from 156 to 250 and then we put a little proportion in for the employer spending more to fund long-term care. No, sorry, that was parental benefit, so there were 2 different rises. It might be 176 to 250 and if we have to come back with a little bit more I could support that. I never really think do we just abolish the cap and then a lot of people keep telling me reasons we should and the same number of people keep telling me reasons why, but gradually it has gone up. It went up in the Government Plan, so again these are the things we have to talk to around the Council of Ministers, take the Assistant Ministers and get

Scrutiny involved as soon as possible, because these things need to be in the recovery plan or in the finance plan if we want to do more things this way. If we want to be a bit more generous that way, how are we going to fund it? There is so much to talk about. It did go up. It went up last year, the cap went up last year, or this year. It was agreed last year and it started on 1st January, but we did not get any money from then. We have got no money from then.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Good point, very good point. The Minister also provided the panel with her own opinion on social security contributions. She said, and I am quoting now: “We have perhaps become a little complacent and we need to readdress the way social security contributions are made.” We found that very interesting, being a former Minister for Social Security herself. What do you make of these comments? Do you agree?

The Minister for Social Security:

We have got a bit complacent? I am not sure if she is saying they should go up. I am not even sure if she is saying we look at the whole thing differently. I have got no idea what that quote meant.

Assistant Minister for Social Security (1):

What is the full context, please, Deputy? That is just the answer from the Minister for Treasury and Resources. What was she asked that made her say that? We cannot possibly have a comment unless we know the full context, of course.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

The first question I asked when the panel asked her about lifting the cap on social security contributions, how the Long-Term Care Fund is funded, and also in the round her opinion as a former Minister for Social Security of how all contributions are reviewed, are looked at, the whole kit and caboodle. So that was where the context of the question was. It was basically her own opinion on the whole structure of social security contributions and she gave that response. I watched the hearing and I thought that was a really interesting response. You being the Minister for Social Security now for almost 2 years, what is the insight of that? The main thing about this pandemic, which I said earlier, is we have had to change processes very quickly to make sure we can help people, as Deputy Wickenden mentioned. I just think that the use of “complacency”, maybe in the speed of a crisis you do not have that timing anymore, you just have to act. As we are hearing, there has been a lot of good decision-making that is helping people actively. So I think that is all the context of what she was saying.

The Minister for Social Security:

We have been very lucky to be able to make some very quick decisions. Every one of those decisions is paying money out, none getting money in. In fact, as I said, we have told people to hang on to their first 2 quarters of contributions and G.S.T. (goods and services tax). We have done that very quickly and if we want to go down this route and if we want to carry on ... as I say, we have not paid any more money out necessarily and we do not want to carry on with the payroll scheme because we want the economy back and we want it paying for itself, but if we want to refresh where we took this money from we may need to look, but to me I am hearing all the advice you do not do it next year. It took a lot of years to save this money and you take a few years to get it back. So I really do not know the exact context of why she was saying about social security but I will ask her when we are having this discussion what she thinks could be done.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

What you just said there was really interesting and I think that for me is all I needed to hear back, so I will move on.

Assistant Minister for Social Security (1):

Could I just add that I think it is great that our Social Security Fund is in such a healthy place. When we start talking about whether we have been complacent or we have doing things the right way or the wrong way, I think the results show that we have got a very healthy Social Security and Pension Fund and the Health Insurance Fund and other funds. We have been doing something right because if we were doing it wrong we would not be in this fortunate position where we can offer all this help right now. I would just like to add that in.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Indeed. Going forward, do you think it would be a good idea to review how social security is accessed in Jersey? Picking up on what Ian has just talked about there and some of the processes that have come shining through, using digital as an example, you could have a mini review and look at the structure in place and go: "Wow, that really worked well when it was stress tested against a crisis; those things did not work so well." Maybe coming out of it, a mini review to see that could put you on a new front footing as we deal with this crisis and the outcome of this for years to come.

The Minister for Social Security:

We could look at that. We also know that hanging around in the background is ... what is it called, Will is in charge of? It is a massive look at all our short-term sick, our long-term sick and everything that is just being done as it is. Some of this goes back to, as Geoff will know, it does not work well, it uses all the wrong criteria. That is a great piece of work that needs to be done. It can be done in conjunction with ... if we are looking at easy wins, and Geoff will know, what we have done on I called it the 2-form income support. Now, do not forget that income support, when me and Geoff

have been through and helped people, it was an 18-page income support form that has got everything on it. It has got disability, it has got everything. You could now maybe swap these forms out, if you want one. If you want 2, you have to fill in 2 forms, but every bit of help was on one very big form that 9 times out of 10 did not apply to the person. You are looking puzzled. You have probably not seen an 18-page income support form, but Geoff has. What I am saying is we will not be throwing the baby out with the bathwater but all people need is money for the short term, that is what they are applying for. They do not even need to flick through all the other pages and that will be looked at, but again in the round there is a big workload that Social Security should and must get done on the long-term and the short-term sick. You cannot work at all if you are on short-term sick. You know, Kevin, for mental health you cannot do anything and that is not very good and you lose your confidence after 2 weeks and if you are signed off then for another 3 months you literally lose the will and confidence to go back to work. So all that work has been promised and been going on. Susie started it, I think - it could have even been Ian before her - and a couple of big, massive reports. So I do not want to throw all that out because I want absolutely to bring it into a modern, proper benefit system. Ian was nodding away. If we have found some good, quicker ways, most people want to do it online or can do it by phone but I never want to be in a position, to quote the name of the film where the poor man could not fill in anything and then he went for his appeal and he had his heart attack. It was not here, by the way, but I do not ever want to get to that position. If a load of people who know what they are doing can do it online, then that will give all our officers much more criteria to give those persons an appointment face to face in a side office and deal with them, lovely, and they are all sorted, so it is just about ... you only get these people not so much, but when you do get them, they need the bit more input. We have always said that, Ian has always said that, if you can get a bit more and then the people who need you, even if they need you to go out to see them, you have got that capacity to do it with your officers. Yes, sometimes, as you say, in a crisis and things happen and you think: "Oh, that would work really well" and you would not have thought of it probably in normal times, but it has worked, so I am really pleased with all what is going on at the moment down there.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes, and I think it comes down to reassurance, does it not? However you get your application in, be it online, over the phone, in person, you just want that reassurance that it is going forward and it is coming, I guess. Is there any work looked at or currently being done to look at alternative forms of social security, of alternative funding models? This is basically in the event that Islanders encounter longer than expected periods of unemployment, financial insecurity or we do return to a lockdown in the winter. Of course this is one of the scenarios that is predicted, that there is a second wave combined with the flu outbreak of the season, that we suddenly have to follow more draconian measures. There is another alternative way. I mean, I know that you mentioned the U.K. furlough

scheme may have looked good at the beginning, but now how can that be sustainable, so just curious if there has been any other looks at what else could be done.

The Minister for Social Security:

I thought you completely started about is there any way of collecting more social security or I misheard there, or different ways, I thought you said, of collecting social security.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes, just different ...

The Minister for Social Security:

Or collecting money to get in to pay it. If we had another way, where would we get the money? Is that ... no?

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes, that is it.

The Minister for Social Security:

I do not know. We have had the one, we have dealt with this one, but I cannot see anything until we meet on Wednesday, Ian, that we have even put thought ... other people have thought about it probably in Treasury, but we have not, as far as I know. Have we, Ian?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

At the moment, the Minister has been very busy supporting officers to get all these new schemes in place. We obviously have yet to look at the recovery side and that is the work that starts tomorrow with the Council of Ministers, so that is where I think the questions you are asking, Deputy, will come from.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Good stuff. Okay, let us move on. One of the major changes of this pandemic has been - you mentioned it earlier - working with the G.P.s and almost practically nationalising, to a point, our health service, which is part of the future Care Model. One of the key elements of this has been the changes to the charges. Obviously, as we all know, the G.P.s, as businesses, set their own charges and were a bit all higgledy-piggledy of who charges what. Now there is a uniform charge. Just curious, from your perspective how were the set charges for the patients arrived to, do you know, to the best of your ability?

The Minister for Social Security:

No, this was strictly Health and officers. If you are asking I was in any of them meetings, no. I saw them and I thought they were very reasonable and so I did not have any more input than that. Sue, on the line, may have been because I know Sam would have been in, but I do not know if Sue was in any of the talks on the charges. Were you, Sue?

Director, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

The Minister is quite correct. The Minister for Health and Social Services set the fees and that was in conjunction with his officers. I am not sure there is much more we can say about that.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

The charges, as we see them, they are compulsory, because some G.P.s do not charge for follow-ups after main consultation, because the area we were falling into beforehand was, as we know, with the payment to the G.P.s from the H.I.F., it all hinged on them physically seeing the patient and there was queries about does a telephone consultation count, does a face-to-face consultation count to when they get their payment, but now of course that has all changed because of the funding structure. I just thought if you could help us with any insight to that process, if you can.

[16:15]

The Minister for Social Security:

No, I did have an input. Obviously it came to light when people ... we were asked on 14th February about people self-isolating and then in the same week our conversation was: "Oh well, if people are self-isolating, should they be going to their doctor?" to think: "I have just come back from China. I might have COVID." So we were asked if we could still have a consultation, as long as it was done on the phone by the G.P. We said yes very quickly. It just made common sense. Again, it was all down to the G.P. If the G.P. halfway through the consultation said: "No, I think you have got nothing to do with COVID, I want to see you" that is down to them and it was always one charge. Then, as you say, it has gone on from there, but they are still working without being COVID and it works well. It is working. Some people, they are still being called in after the initial consultation because the G.P. knows it is nothing to do with COVID and they want to see them to get to the bottom of this other health issue, which is perfectly fine. They are dealing with that in hot and cold and the one at the hospital, so the G.P.s, working with all the consultants, it is a fantastic idea in this emerging of COVID because if you like it, it is one chain of command and it comes from the top of Health and they are working and they are enjoying it and it works well, apparently.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Of course this was an agreed contract of 4 months so at some stage we will have to see if it is going to be extended, and obviously if that is the case, as we know, as the Assembly, we passed the

funding ... well, the Consolidation Fund funded it and we took money out of the H.I.F. to give back to the Treasury as well as other things. So have you had any indication that that contract could possibly be extended, therefore maybe needing another possible injection of cash from the H.I.F. to continue that, if they decide to continue that arrangement to the end of the year?

The Minister for Social Security:

This is my opinion. I could only see this being extended on both sides because of a second spike, and the way that we would absolutely need to carry on working like this, so I am hoping for not a second spike and I am then probably seeing that why would we go to the end of the year if everything is back to normal. So I am not saying no, but all these things have been costed for a certain amount. If they are needed, we make another decision, come to the Assembly for more money, and if not, things will go back to a point of normal. But at least it is giving G.P.s and the hospital a great chance to work together better, seeing their own patients at a different place and which was basically the foundations for the Jersey Care Model, so it might escalate it a bit after this when we are in a normal world, Deputy Pamplin.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Indeed, whatever that may look like. So I will just wrap up this before I hand over to Deputy Pointon. So do you plan on undertaking a post-COVID-19 actuarial review of the H.I.F.?

The Minister for Social Security:

We have got down to every 4 years and it was the Government Plan or election year. Sue will remind me of that. I do not know whether we would need another one in 2 years, whether it changed that much. It might be, as you say, because we have spent, but it should not. I do not know. Sue might know the answer to that.

Director, Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:

The H.I.F., I think the answer to that will depend on what happens with the Jersey Care Model. Again, it is a bit too soon for that at the minute, but later in the year when things settle down a bit, the Minister for Health and Social Services will be able to come back to his plans for the Care Model and at that point there will need to be really sensible discussions about the future of the H.I.F. So whether it is an actuarial review or just a review, I think something will happen within the next 12 months, but not imminently.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes, that is good to know because obviously going forward, this scheme would seem to be working well with the G.P.s and how it is working will need to be funded, but actuarially how that long-term forecast of using the H.I.F. to do that, it is just ... it is in a good place, as we know, because we

obviously scrutinised the last regulation, but it is just going forward how you could sustain that long term.

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes. I just do not want to burst your bubble, but it was never the H.I.F. to afford the new Care Model. Even in Geoff's proposition it said "a sustainable funding mechanism" and if we choose to have whatever we choose, it will not be the H.I.F. It just cannot be the H.I.F. because there is not enough money in it to be a sustainable funding mechanism for a new healthcare model. But it will be in the mix, if you see what I mean.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I do. That is really helpful. Again, that is what we wanted to hear. That is me done for now. I will hand over to Deputy Pointon. Thank you.

The Deputy of St. John:

No, it is all right. I had a problem there with my mic, it would not unmute for me. These electronic things are outside my control, I apologise. Can I follow on, Deputy Pamplin, with your last question, which I thought was very interesting? The Jersey Care Model, my understanding is that the Jersey Care Model is going to be reliant on G.P. arrangements changing dramatically and mirroring the changes that have taken place during COVID-19's invasion of our society. I applaud the way the G.P.s and Health have come together, I think it is really fantastic that we have a very new arrangement, albeit there is still charges upfront which I am not terribly keen on. Sustainable funding, and this is a question, Minister - or it will become a question - what are your thoughts on the idea that in order to prolong the arrangements we have with the G.P.s what will a sustainably funded arrangement look like?

The Minister for Social Security:

No, I do not know what it looks like, because when it came to the Assembly before, I did not vote for it. It did not have enough meat on the bone and that was in about 2013/14, it might have been a little bit before. All I was saying ... and Deputy Southern is on the line, but I am sure his proposition said - and we have been through line by line - to bring back the G.P., bring back a sustainable ...

The Deputy of St. John:

Can I interrupt you, Minister?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, of course.

The Deputy of St. John:

I am not wanting to look at the history of previous attempts. I am trying to look at what you consider to be the way forward in relation to sustainable funding.

The Minister for Social Security:

You made a comment in your opening remarks that this is working well, what we have got now. I think that is working out about £1 million a month. You also said you were not keen on any charges, so we would have to add that on. So first I would need to know the bill and I suppose everyone would need to know the bill for who it is for free and then work out who can pay. To me, there would have to be a little bit of money obviously, I would imagine, for somebody ...

The Deputy of St. John:

You have not considered spreading this cost across the whole of the population in Jersey, especially in relation to those people that can afford the cost?

The Minister for Social Security:

No, because as I said, when we got to that, we would be probably looking at now Deputy Southern's proposition right in detail and looking at that, what the sustainable looks like, who can it be for free and then we have had the COVID hit us. So it is not an excuse, Deputy Pointon, it really has not been discussed. I know what you are saying. We need to identify the cost for everybody, if that is what you want. Some people do not want everybody in it and then we would have to have a few different options, but it is costed and then who do we charge for that? I think that is what you are asking me.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Sorry, Trevor, can I just add ...

The Deputy of St. John:

If I might continue the conversation with the Minister, so might some of those additional costs be met by increased social security payments and/or increased taxation?

The Minister for Social Security:

Considering we only have social security and taxation, if that is the way we go, it will cost more money. It will cost more money, so that is the answer. I need to know exactly what is being proposed. Unlike you, I always think there should be a certain amount of money by the patient. Me and you can disagree on that. I do not want us to ever get to some of the terrible scenes that I have seen in the U.K., which is brilliant now, because nobody is going to A. and E. (Accident and

Emergency) because they are more worried of the COVID than sitting there for 18 hours and getting a doctor's appointment 2 days earlier than they would have, but ...

The Deputy of St. John:

Conversely, the effect here, is it not, Minister, that everyone was going to A. and E. rather than going to their G.P. previously?

The Minister for Social Security:

Not necessarily. Why are they doing it in the U.K. when it is free, the doctors are free and they are doing more? They cannot believe it now, they are saying they are 50 per cent down in every A. and E. in the U.K. than they were this time last year, because more people are frightened to go with a bad toe than they are getting the COVID. So their system is not right and ours is not right. I am saying we need to know who we are trying to help, what it will cost and then who is going to pay for it. It is simple.

Assistant Minister for Social Security (2):

It is a Health Department issue.

The Minister for Social Security:

It is the Health Department, but I think Deputy Pointon is saying would I believe putting up contributions ...

The Deputy of St. John:

It is about funding.

The Minister for Social Security:

The H.I.F. is being ... yes.

The Deputy of St. John:

Okay, let me move on to questions that I have been asked to ask you. The Chief Minister said that future Government spending and accounts will have a greater focus on sustainable well-being. What do you expect this to mean for your department?

The Minister for Social Security:

The well-being. Yes, again I think it comes back to that, so when you are costing something, you have to take the well-being of the people into it. I do not know if in cost-wise it will have a lot of money, but it needs to be thought about of how we do these things. Yes, I have not discussed that one. I know it is in the new financial ...

The Deputy of St. John:

Okay. We are not going to get an answer to this.

The Minister for Social Security:

No, you are not going to.

The Deputy of St. John:

What work has been undertaken to estimate the number of Islanders expected to fall into poverty, working or otherwise, as a result of this crisis?

The Minister for Social Security:

We have got a safety net for everybody at the moment, so why would they be in poverty? Income support pays their full rent, it gives quite a few different components, extra components for the first child. People who fall through the net may have no money, but all the things that are under mine are designed to stop people falling into poverty.

The Deputy of St. John:

What work are you doing with other Ministers to inform your work in relation to this particular issue?

The Minister for Social Security:

Obviously the Stats Unit are just collecting data at the moment on how many people are still getting a wage, how many people are working. We have gone about 1,000 on average on income support and 360 people on the C.R.E.S.S. Again, you say poverty and I say these are support schemes.

The Deputy of St. John:

Let us then take this up. If there is not any poverty because of the support schemes, the Food Foundation in the U.K. reported a rise in the number of people using foodbanks. There are certainly a number of people in Jersey, the rise in the numbers of people in Jersey using foodbanks and we know that the Salvation Army, for example, and other churches in the Island have been pouring practical assistance into foodbanks. Why are people using foodbanks if there is not poverty?

The Minister for Social Security:

I would rather somebody gets a hot meal and some support. I do not know. There is going to be some work cross-section of ... we did, on the community group, when the C.R.E.S.S. scheme went live on the 1st, we thought some of the foodbanks, not necessarily that one, but some of the foodbanks would maybe go down because they had not known about the schemes and then they were getting the schemes, but these things all need to be looked at. We have not had time to do

the cross-analysis yet because you are working on the job. At the moment though, I am not important. I would rather 20 people get an extra free meal, a hot meal, if they do not need it than miss 2 people, so that is the way it is working and people ...

[16:30]

The Deputy of St. John:

Minister, this is not about people getting a hot meal, this is about people who cannot afford to buy their own food in the supermarket and so are reliant upon foodbanks for their weekly shop, for their daily shop. What are you going to do about that, if that is not poverty?

The Minister for Social Security:

As I say, I would have to look. That is people going ... there are loads of different reasons people have told me they go, because it is around the corner, they go because, yes, they cannot get to a supermarket and get the ingredients for the hot meal. They are going for one hot meal a day, but they can get someone to bring them the bare basics, but they are going there for ... I would not say just the ...

The Deputy of St. John:

I think we are skirting the issue again. Why would these people go to a foodbank if they could afford to go to Waitrose or the Co-op? Are these people not in dire financial stress?

Assistant Minister for Social Security (1):

We do not have those statistics, do we, Deputy Pointon?

The Minister for Social Security:

I do not know who these people ...

The Deputy of St. John:

I am not saying you do.

Assistant Minister for Social Security (1):

So you are putting your spin on it, but that is not exactly what it is, and I think it is unfair that you are throwing this in such a way towards the Minister, Deputy Pointon.

The Minister for Social Security:

No, no, I understand what the Deputy is saying. I am not agreeing that I have not done the ... I have not gone up to those people and say, in the short amount of time: "Oh, were you not down the road

the other day picking up your C.R.E.S.S.? Why are you still here?" or: "Why were you doing this?" I have just said I would rather X amount of people get a free meal than interrogate them now. Deputy Pointon has put the other term on it, they are all there because they cannot afford any food. I could give you all the components of income support and I will give them to you after and then I would have to analyse and say why, unless you have got loads of big bills, that this money should be ... and C.R.E.S.S. should be enough. I think one of the supermarkets is charging £35 and can deliver you food for 5 days, 5 hot meals, £35. I cannot remember which supermarket, but it is on our community group, so yes.

The Deputy of St. John:

I want to leave this aside, but I wonder whether it is worth Social Security doing some research in relation to the usage of foodbanks because the people using the foodbanks are those people who are really in need and you need to have an understanding perhaps of the difference between having X amount of money per week and in association with the liabilities that individuals have.

Assistant Minister for Social Security (2):

That is a really interesting statement, Deputy, and I would be really interested to see the evidence you have to back that up. Thank you.

The Deputy of St. John:

I am saying that is research that perhaps Social Security should be involved in.

The Minister for Social Security:

We are talking to the people running the facilities and with the community group and who the people are coming forward. I hear stories. Not all are in poverty, Deputy Pointon. I am taking your point. I could understand, and you could be talking about the person, the new person, who has literally been plodding along for the last 10 years and had a pretty good job, wife was not working and he has lost his employment overnight. He has probably got £2,000 a month in bills, let alone what he is going to eat. If I am giving him £2,000, it really does not help him unless he sorts out his other financial ... I can understand that and there will be more of them. The people who have just become unemployed were probably always working and they will have extras to pay out and until they get their extras sorted, to me it is rent first, food second. Well, medicines are free. You pay for your rent, your food and medicines and then the rest, you write to all your creditors - and I do not need to give you a lesson on this because I know what C.A.B. (Citizens Advice Bureau) tell them - and say: "I am out of work. I am offering you X amount a week." You never leave the other 3 until you have paid all them, but people might be doing that. But we can look into that. We are doing it at a very high level. We are talking to the ...

The Deputy of St. John:

I just offered you food for thought, Minister. If we can move on, I have got another subject heading and that is volunteer.je. Would you be able to provide the panel with an update on your work as part of the community steering group for the volunteer.je initiative?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, I am chairing this volunteer.je and we have been so lucky. The first 2 or 3 weeks we got 2,000 volunteers all under 65, over 18, and 1,000 of them had driving licences and we had them raring to go, all police checked and everything, and then literally there is still loads of work that they can do, but I think the community, the Parishes, lots of other people have picked this up. As you say, the Salvation Army and the likes, Caring Cooks, lots of people who are working, but some of them ... and I can understand their frustration. We have not given them enough work, but that is the success, so what else do we do? We co-ordinate with the Parishes, we have put out lots of information in one big drop. We have got another big drop coming out on 11th May and weekly we meet. Deputy Alves is on this group as well as Deputy Gardiner too and they have been great, getting in the Constables and people we might have missed, the people who are hard to reach in certain communities, not just hard to reach because they might be poor.

The Deputy of St. John:

So you are talking about the structure of volunteer.je but we have heard today that an enormous amount of money that used to go into the charitable sector to support volunteers, to get aid out to people in need, an enormous of money is simply not going into the charitable sector because of the COVID-19 interruption. There was an appeal in the *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* today, and I have to refer - it is not on my question plan - to entrepreneurs, or not entrepreneurs, philanthropists, to begin donating to this particular sector. What do you know about that?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, we have a funding group on it. It is chaired by Simon Boas and he is doing the funding, but this community group is a co-ordinating group, so it makes sure whatever is going on in the Parishes or there is good work there, we meet and it goes around. We are not taking, as far as I know, any money off of local charities.

The Deputy of St. John:

What I am saying, Minister, is that the charities that you are working with are likely to be in steep decline if the financial income they receive is not chased because they have lost so much income over the last month.

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, I read that this morning, only the last couple of weeks, because it was referring to the ... oh, I thought the Bailiff appeal, but the Bailiff appeal was going to do some of that, but not all of it. So if one of the charities are really busy, let us say the Salvation Army, as much as this group do is just put volunteers in contact with them, because they are already police checked.

Assistant Minister for Social Security (1):

Can I add in a bit here? Just something from the Council of Ministers, which is we have got the Association of Charities to contact all of the charities and ask them about their finances and where they are going to struggle at the moment, with a view to seeing where we can help them. There is money from the Lotteries Fund that is going in to try and help the charities out so that their deficits ... because they are not getting money in now and they are not doing much fundraising, and there is also the dormant bank account area that we are looking at. So we have been using the Association of Charities to go out to charities, to go and ask them about where they are struggling and how we can help certainly in financial matters. That is happening.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

If I could just add in also that the co-funded payroll scheme, phase 2, does also include charities who have employees, so if their income has dropped by more than 30 per cent, they can also claim under that scheme.

The Deputy of St. John:

Again, because I am conscious of time, it was recently announced, Minister, that those without full entitled status in Jersey would be required to undertake work for the Government of Jersey in order to receive that benefit.

The Minister for Social Security:

No, on all of the forms it says: "You may be asked to volunteer." That is all it says, as far as I know. It is not statute. I cannot make people work. Are you talking about the co-funded one, the C.R.E.S.S. or income support? Which one, Deputy?

The Deputy of St. John:

All of them. The very idea takes me back to the days when I was negotiating with the Parish of St. Helier for welfare payments to people who were resident in the Shelter Trust. Only a year before, 2 years before I was making those requests, the Parish had required men to go and break rocks in Westmount Quarry. I know we are not going to do that these days, but the very idea that we would require people to do work for the Parish, is that not a bit of an anathema?

The Minister for Social Security:

No, there is a line on each of them, but you can put that in either way you like, so say we get all the people who are working up at Bellozanne go sick and I know that I have got on my books people who can do that work, do I let all the toilets back up in Jersey or do I ask those men to go and work at Bellozanne? I am not saying ... it says on there: "You may be asked to do some voluntary work" and it could be paid work because our scheme lets you on the scheme and be paid, but I ...

The Deputy of St. John:

That was the point I was getting to. Are we saying: "If you do do work for the Parish, we will pay you"?

The Minister for Social Security:

Why are you saying the Parish? This is Island ...

The Deputy of St. John:

No, for the Island.

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, sorry. So that goes back to it is called income support, but there are no jobs out there. We are not chasing people at the moment. I am just saying if there is a job somebody ... and we have got all these volunteers. It is something we put on there, hoping ... no, I am not going to go and ask people to break up rocks that we do not need breaking up. If there are some people sitting there with a skill that will absolutely keep the Island going in essential work, you would offer it to them. There is nothing in the law that is set at the moment, especially on the C.R.E.S.S. scheme and the payroll scheme, I do not think I have the law, the vires to make them do it. We just hope that they would want to do it if it is going to help the Island.

The Deputy of St. John:

That is very reassuring, Minister, very reassuring. Thank you. We have some final questions for you and Deputy Hegarat is going to ask the first.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Sorry, I was just taking a minute to put my camera and my mic on. Yes, just finally there is just a couple of minor questions. Have you considered post-COVID plans for addressing any financial losses that have resulted during this time?

The Minister for Social Security:

Do you mean loss of income into Social Security?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Yes, basically to your department. Have you considered sort of any ways of addressing any financial losses that have resulted as what is going on at the moment? Have you considered anything in relation to moving forward?

The Minister for Social Security:

No, at the moment we have considered not putting anything up or changing it because we have not had those discussions yet. Yes, I get what you are saying. Not at the moment, no. I am not saying it will not happen, but we have not yet.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

I will move on then to Deputy Southern.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Finally got there, could not hit the button. Okay, in a recession - and we are heading for a recession - pressure will be on all departments to make some form of savings. What consideration has the Minister given to halt, defer or reduce any of her spending plans for 2020?

The Minister for Social Security:

Again, I am sorry, Geoff, it is exactly the same. We have not had that discussion yet. We have literally got all the ducks in a row. The last one to go live was the second phase co-funding at the weekend and now we need to start sitting down and having a look at what the figures will be and those discussions you have just asked. So next time we meet, anything - as I say, Deputy Le Hegarat will know - we inform you first and sometimes it might just be an officer briefing, but you will get to know, but the answer at the moment is no.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

I think that is me now, so my final question is what role are you, as Minister for Social Security, taking in helping to design and prepare the exit and recovery strategies for Jersey?

[16:45]

The Minister for Social Security:

We all know the phase we are now, but again, the real hard level work about what Jersey will look like, what we may need to do is starting tomorrow at C.O.M. and so I cannot give you any more information than that because the direction, how do we need to get there, is it less there, do we need more here, taking all the points in that have been brought to our attention over the last 3 weeks. At the same time while you are doing that, you have got to have an eye over right and left shoulder and

make sure the old corona is not coming back to get you. So a strategy is a strategy until something ... we had a business plan - do you remember the Government Plan - until this came along. It was going down nicely, but anyway, honestly, as soon as we know something and we think it is worth telling you, you will know.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay. Can I pass on to Deputy Pamplin? Thank you.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Thank you, and again, thank you, Minister, for extending the time. This has been really helpful to us and to everybody for giving up their time. My question returns to the Family Friendly legislation. It is still your ambition to bring that forward. As we know, it is an Appointed Day Act now, we passed it as the Assembly. What would be the reasons why that does not come into play in this year, and secondly, probably a question for Ian as well, if we starting unlocking the Island, as we saw the blueprint for this last week, how quickly could you reopen the Customer and Local Services front-facing office under the ongoing physical distancing requirements? Thank you.

The Minister for Social Security:

You are very good to try and push me on that because, as I said, at the first meeting it was the first time it was seriously ... just last Friday I have asked a couple of things on the Family Friendly and if I get them ... if these can work out, you will hear about them by probably Tuesday before I do probably a statement in the Assembly. Then I will tell you the 2 or 3 things, but I am not saying it yet because, I am sorry, there are loads of rumours. I have loads of emails, they emerge from somewhere, this, that and the other. It could not have happened because, as I say, it was not discussed weeks ago and when I asked the people where they heard these rumours, it is not from Scrutiny, it is people probably putting 2 and 2 together out there. I cannot say more than that, but as soon as we know, you will be the first people that know before the States Assembly or any other States Members on that. Sorry, what did you ask Ian about the ...

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes, it is just in the blueprint for the unlocking of the partial lockdown in the stages when the potential is to reopen the front-serving Social Security at La Motte Street, how quickly could that be opened with the physical distancing requirements in place for the health and safety of the customer, the Islanders, and staff?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, so I think while social distancing stays at 2 metres, it is quite hard to have a confidential conversation with somebody and our interview rooms are not generally big enough even to do that

by appointment, so it really will depend upon when social distancing comes down beneath 2 metres. When that happens, that is the sort of time we will be able to have a look at a reopening. The library is slightly different. We might be able to do that slightly earlier, but the same sort of issues would apply in terms of people accessing the building and making sure that both the public and the staff are kept safe.

The Minister for Social Security:

Ian has mentioned - he will not mind me talking out of turn because he cannot, because we are not even in the same room and he cannot keep me under the table - as you said, why would we not look at the good things that have come out of this? Especially now, but if there are people who need it, on certain afternoons you have appointments. You do not have to do things the same way. There are things to learn, absolutely, so that will be taken on board as well. That might not be just when we are in social distancing, but it is better practice for the customer. As I say, you will get 50 customers who can fly through that form and have no problem, a couple who phone you up. You will have some ... that would be me in the old days, sitting there for 4 days, cannot get head nor tail of it, somebody I ring up and they can come and see me or I can go and see them because we have got more people dealing with the special people like me, the I.T. specials I mean. So yes, we will take it all on board and going forward the best way to help the customers, all of them, as well.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes, and just with my old working head on, just to confirm what, Ian, you were just saying then, in the next stage of lockdown, in stage 3, that would not include the reopening of the Customer and Local Services front office, it will be somewhere in the future?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

I do not have that in front of me, so it says whenever we go beneath 2 metres, I think. If it goes to a metre, for example, we found that we were able to have conversations with people. It makes it more difficult, of course, particularly if you are coming to the desk and the like, but the Minister is right, there are other ways of us being able to operate. The whole vision around Closer to Home, for example, was that we are more, along with partners, out in the community helping people who cannot get the access to help in town. We have got to look at all of that as we seek to reopen, but it does not necessarily mean we go back to exactly as it was before if we can do it better.

The Minister for Social Security:

No, and I know it was a hard decision for Ian to say. He phoned me and he said we were seeing people being made unemployed and they were straight down there, and as it is, upset and whatever, right in the face of the workers. We had teams, some already from home, and Ian said: "We have got to keep these people the most safest people you see as well as your front line because people

want to be able to get the original benefits and carry on and these are my skilled.” So it shut and it has worked, nobody even thinks of even going down there now and it is working. You do need somewhere for people to go because it had loads of other things and it was planning, was it not, tax and everything. Do not want to throw the baby out with the bathwater, but anything that we can learn and other things can learn, we just ... and we certainly will not be opening early, put it that way, because these are again the people, got the teams sorted, they know what they are doing. We have got to keep them well and safe to deliver the benefits so people cannot go ... they can do what they are doing on a daily basis, really. So we might be a little bit after the rest, that is what I am saying, but it will be done on medical advice and for safety of the staff.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Of course, and again we pay tribute to all the front line staff and all the changes they have to go through as well. Thank you, Minister. A final question, over to Deputy Pointon, all the way up north in St. John.

The Deputy of St. John:

Yes, it is a long way away up here and thank you to 365 and Teams. Minister, I do not have a specifically new question, but what I do have is a mirror back to the answer you gave in relation to the future Care Model and the funding of the future Care Model. Could I ask you to recap on how you would see it funded for the future should it continue as it is currently or an enhanced version of the future Care Model in relation to G.P.s?

The Minister for Social Security:

I can only repeat my answer before. When this came about in 2012 or 2013, there was a specific charge for doctors, healthcare, and it lost by one or 2 votes in the Assembly. I cannot remember all it entailed. Deputy Southern will remember it. My point was in Deputy Southern’s Back-Bencher’s proposition that we accepted, Health accepted and myself, there was a line in it to make sure we have a sustainable funding model. Now, what that looks like because of the time and the work that has been put off, Deputy Pointon, I do not know. The ...

The Deputy of St. John:

Which is where I will hold you up again and ask you to, if you like, look at the future, look at where we might go in terms of a future funding model.

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, I have not said that, but you have asked me to describe what it looks like. I said I need to know how much it is going to cost. I can find you a funding model probably off the peg as long as I know how much it is going to cost and who is paying into it. Is it all the population; is it half the population;

is it X of the population? So I cannot make it up for you today, the future funding model that will pay for the primary care going forward because we were just in discussions about that and the COVID-19 hit. Sorry, I know you want a direct answer, but I am not fudging it. I do not have it for you.

The Deputy of St. John:

You are just one Minister among several, so you would not be able to say that. I do agree you are in a ...

The Minister for Social Security:

No, whatever funding model it is, it did not just go to a Minister, it went to the Assembly last time. It lost by 2 votes, so ...

The Deputy of St. John:

The proposal might come from the C.O.M.

The Minister for Social Security:

It might well do. It may well do. That does not mean it is always going to get passed in the Assembly, Deputy.

The Deputy of St. John:

That is all from me, thank you.

The Minister for Social Security:

Okay. Are we finished, Deputy Le Hegarat?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Yes. Thank you for this afternoon and for the extra time. I am conscious it is now nearly 5.00 p.m., so we are grateful that everyone was able to stay for longer and having to answer all the questions that we have put together. Hopefully the public have been able to hear some of this being livestreamed, because that is always a challenge, depending on what type of equipment that they have. Unfortunately they cannot do it on iPads or mobile phones, so hopefully the public have been able to listen to us and we look forward to being able to see and speak to you again in the very near future, so thank you from the Health and Social Security Panel. Thank you very much for all the Ministers and officers that have contributed to the discussions and also to the Scrutiny team, who have been streaming all of this, as we have had a number of them as well. So thank you very much and goodbye.

[16:56]