



# Health and Social Services Scrutiny Panel

## Quarterly Hearing

### Witness: The Minister for Social Security

Monday, 8th March 2021

**Panel:**

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

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

Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier

**Witnesses:**

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

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

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

Mr. P. McGinnety, Director of Local Services

[10:01]

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

Good morning, everybody. We are just awaiting confirmation from Social Security in relation to their logistics. However, good morning, everybody. This is the first public hearing with the Minister for Social Security and the department. Shortly I will introduce the panel members. The rules for today will be the normal rules that we would have, should we be based in the States building. My name is Deputy Mary Le Hegarat and I am the chair of the Health and Social Security Scrutiny Panel.

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

Good morning, everybody. Deputy Kevin Pamplin of St. Saviour District 1, and I am the vice-chair of this panel.

**Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier:**

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

**The Minister for Social Security:**

Good morning. I am the Minister, Deputy Judy Martin, and I would like to give apologies for my Assistant Minister who has had to go to another Scrutiny hearing; the first for the Minister for Children and Education today. I would like to wish Deputy Alves and Deputy Le Hegarat a very happy Women's Day.

**Director General, Customer and Local Services:**

Good morning, Ian Burns, director general, Customer and Local Services. As you can see we are just having some slight problems with the sound at the moment. Hopefully you can hear me fine.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Yes, thank you.

**Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:**

Good morning, Sue Duhamel, head of Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning Department.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Just for your information, Sue Duhamel is very mute so we will need to address that moving forward. Could anybody else that is going to contribute this morning please introduce themselves?

**Director of Local Services:**

Good morning, everybody, Paul McGinnety, director of Local Services.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

That would appear everybody has been introduced. Obviously if anybody comes that does contribute that has not already introduce themselves then we would ask them to do so. We will first move off with COVID-19 response, and I call on Deputy Alves to ask the questions, thank you.

**Deputy C.S. Alves:**

The COVID-19 isolation benefit is currently set at a standard rate of £32.14 per day where the period of isolation is longer than one day. Can the Minister advise what the standard rate of £32.14 is based on please?

**The Minister for Social Security:** It is based on exactly the same as short-term sick money, so I think the standard weekly rate is £225.80-something, and that is exactly what it is. It started off as

the sick rate, it got recalled the isolation benefit, but other people still get that. If they have got COVID it is called "isolation" and if they are sick with a sore finger they will get their sick money. It is exactly the same amount of money.

**Deputy C.S. Alves:**

Has your department received any feedback from claimants concerned about the amount of benefit paid being insufficient to meet their living expenses?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

Not particularly. We ask things like this, if people are going from ... they might not just have ... there are all different things. They may still be getting a full wage but they can have the sick, if they sort that out with their boss. The short-term sick is what it has always been. No, nobody has really raised anything with the department.

**Deputy C.S. Alves:**

Have you heard anything from people who have not claimed that they have been put off from claiming due to the rates that it is currently set at? Put off coming forward and being open about their symptoms because of the rates of payment.

**The Minister for Social Security:**

Sorry, are you asking if people are not coming forward for COVID because they do not want to take time off work or they do not want to come through with COVID because they do not think it is enough money? I need to understand the question.

**Deputy C.S. Alves:**

That is absolutely fine. I have heard from constituents who have been very reluctant to come forward about their symptoms because the isolation rate is so low that it has put them off basically so have you heard anything similar?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

No, and then that would also depend on the family's case. If they were a low-income family they would still have their top-up from income support. But I hope they are not isolating because they think the money is too low because that just spreads the illness, does it not? I have no evidence of that, no.

**Deputy C.S. Alves:**

The panel notes that the social security contributions will continue at a reduced level of 4 per cent until June 2021. Do you have any plans to extend this reduction in contributions or phase in the return to the standard 6 per cent rate?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

No, we have had no discussions. We have taken it away and it comes back, as you say, on that day. It will not be phased in. It is a 2 per cent reduction at the moment. I have not spoken about it at all. It went out, it is coming back in and I have not discussed anything on doing it any differently.

**Deputy C.S. Alves:**

In the 2021 Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance business plan the panel notes the review of the incapacity benefit system to support workers with long-term health conditions. Please can you advise whether any of the outcomes of this review are likely to change as a result of COVID-19?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

It is wider than that. There were a couple of massive reports probably about 4 years ago when Deputy Pinel was the Minister. One from Academic and one from ... who knew about these things. They are very good reports and they basically looked at the whole of our incapacity system and said it is not fit for purpose in the 21st century and things. COVID may affect it but all of it, every benefit we pay under the incapacity and work, are being talked about. There is another meeting tomorrow, I think, afternoon through our webinar because we have some people from the U.K. (United Kingdom) and obviously they cannot come here at the moment. So I do not have any of what is going to be in and out but the way we do incapacity benefits will change but what they are, we are not that far ahead yet.

**Deputy C.S. Alves:**

I am going to hand over to Deputy Pamplin who will be asking some questions on the disability strategy.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Before I kick off, I think you did at the beginning, Minister, but I would like to pay tribute to my fellow panel members, the chair of this panel, the chair of P.P.C. (Privileges and Procedures Committee), you, Minister, and our Scrutiny officer, and one of your directors sat next to you, on International Women's Day. You keep inspiring many other little girls who maybe in our chairs in the future, so I just wanted to note that. I have always been surrounded by powerful women and that continues as of today. So I hope I have buttered you up nicely enough to get some good answers out of you, Minister.

**The Minister for Social Security:**

You could have said I would make a good candidate for the “Real Housewives of Jersey”.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

How did you know my question plan? But anyway I will scrap that off the list. Back to matters in hand. I am going to focus this next section on the disability strategy, a very important strategy. We noted it was announced, and we have seen 2 disability inclusion officers have been appointed by Customer and Local Services in September last year. What has been their immediate priorities in the first 6 months of their employment?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

They are working together on all the strands. Funnily enough, after this meeting - that is why I must get away at 11.30 - I am meeting with one of the inclusion officers with a couple of other politicians and Paul McGinney to discuss how we could make things more inclusive. I think this stream is in politics but that is just one of the streams. Then there is making sure that everyone feels inclusive. We have a new man starting, I think, today or he might be starting ... he is here. For all the strands and what is going on you really need to speak to Paul McGinney who is in charge and on the ground. It is moving very quickly so would you like him to bring you up to date on that one?

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Yes, absolutely.

**Director of Local Services:**

Yes, you are quite right. We are delighted to have him join the team. The focus has been, as well as re-establishing this delivery group, which I think you have seen we have a very diverse delivery group, has also been supporting the vaccination programme. We have been working closely with a number of charitable organisations, we have a learning disability cluster, to make sure that we are supporting Islanders with a disability, as well as videos, et cetera, making sure that Fort Regent was as accessible as possible. Also they have been working to make sure that our information improves and also raising awareness around disability and inclusion. I am sure you will have seen Ant Lewis, one of the officers, on Channel over the Christmas period. There has been a lot of work to get the groups going. What we have tried to do is support the organisations. What we have seen - I know we have discussed the impact of the pandemic on different groups - is a real resilience. We have seen some fantastic work from Parishes, from charities, from volunteers, from funders, and so our work has really been to support those organisations as we went back into the lockdown and as we gradually come out. Where we are now, the Minister is quite right, we have a returning Jerseyman, who has 25 years of international social development. He is returning to the Island. He is going to lead the project. The idea is we have started his induction and he will work to look at the strategy,

map out what progress has been made since 2017, what we need to do and have a definitive timeline working in partnership with all the fantastic agencies who we have here on the Island. In short, that is what we have been doing. It has been the practical support. We took the view that it is very difficult to deliver a strategy in a pandemic. What could we do practically to support organisations; and that is what we have done.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

I will move on then to the next question because Les Amis noted in the disability strategy update that the government guidance on the various lockdown phases - as you mentioned the pandemic - was, in their words, complicated, sometimes resulted in frustration with families and residents who could not visit family members or go back to work.

[10:15]

This is something that we all did not see happening and everything was happening in real time. But that aside, what can you tell us about that and what lessons have you learnt from the pandemic so far, and as the progress of the pandemic fell out. Then I will come to my next question.

**Director of Local Services:**

In fairness, and I spoke to the chair of Les Amis, and again things were moving at such a pace that the guidance had to change with the restrictions. What we have learnt, and colleagues from Health have established this, and I established this when I was also back in Health, was regular meetings and they were daily meetings with all the providers to share information, to look at staffing pressures, et cetera. I think that interaction and having the frequent question and answer sessions with the likes of Becky Sherrington, Adrian Noon and others, that we widened out. It was not just the Government of Jersey. Crucially it was the fantastic care organisations who look after vulnerable Islanders, mental health organisations, they were all allowed to have that interaction. I think that is a valuable lesson moving forward, is to not just put the information out but to have that regular chance to interpret it and come back and ask questions.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

On that, you mentioned regular meetings with partners, and communication has been a lesson for everybody in the last year because one note that has been said to me is the very important press conferences, especially getting information out about vaccines or where we are in the pandemic. For example, not having somebody do sign interpretation, the subtitles have been hit or miss, with some various interesting translations appearing. It seems like ... not that it was not on the conscious of people delivering communication but it was not as good as it could be. Is there any way you can improve those things and what other steps to improve communication in the round?

**Director of Local Services:**

It is working in partnership with those organisations who have the expertise. We work closely with the deaf community because I know there were some issues there. I think moving forward one of the key areas of the strategy is to make information accessible to all. I think the way that we do that is through the groups that we have established. I touched upon the diversity of the groups. In terms of where we are, we have a very equal gender balance. We have a very diverse group in terms of representing the deaf community, the sight-impaired community, autism, physical disability and learning disabilities, and through those clusters and those regular networks we can collectively come up and deliver the solutions. You can always improve on communications and that is something the strategy group are very keen to do. Just on that, when we did manage to get the strategy group together for the first time, obviously it was quite difficult during the pandemic, we worked with D/Deaf to make sure that we had subtitles, a live signer as well as visual. Although logistically it was quite a challenge, especially through Teams, it was certainly worth it. Moving forward that is one of the lessons that we would like to take forward.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Also, Acorn, which is J.E.T. (Jersey Employment Trust), also noted in the disability strategy update that they expect referrals to rise, particularly in relation to mental health issues. I think everybody knows my views on this but what extra provision for additional support for the service, in your discussions you have been having, to cope with the potential rise in referrals and mental health issues? We are seeing it more and more. I know I keep going on and on about this. We have just seen the U.K. Government invest even more money into supporting mental health for all age groups so when are we going to do more, seeing the rises, we saw the rises in children, we are hearing from other charities, they are getting more calls. What more from the feedback you can tell us can you do?

**Director of Local Services:**

I think in terms of that, ever since June we have been meeting as part of a financial impact action group, which links in with mental health providers as well as people such as Christians Against Poverty, Caritas and others to monitor the temperature on the ground in terms of food banks and referrals. We also work closely with a mental health cluster, which is a mix of providers right across the area of the Listening Lounge, Mind Jersey, et cetera. I think what they are looking at is getting the information out to people so people can come forward. That is a piece of work that I know that particular cluster are doing. In terms of the referrals for J.E.T. and Acorn, we have obviously seen the jobs market and unfortunately we know, if we look at international data, that people with a disability are sometimes not at the front of that queue. There is a lot more we can do as a community to promote inclusion, to encourage people to come forward to access the services that are there.

But I also think, and I touched upon it earlier, we also have to call out the resilience that we have seen. We have been in touch with organisations right throughout this pandemic and what we have seen is people have stood up, they have worked collectively, they have had a real focus. If you look at our community's strengths, which is where we differ from the mainland. We have 3,500 volunteers that have come forward. We have seen funders who have been the unsung heroes funding additional shelter support for Refuge. We have seen organisations, and you will see in the strategy report, change their offer. I think what we did with the strategy report, just for context, it was obviously very difficult to say what progress we could make during a pandemic. We physically could not meet but it was really important that as a government we acknowledged our partners and the work that they have done, both the good things that have happened but also some of the issues that you have mentioned such as Les Amis. So what we can learn from them collectively and move forward. That is why we did not want to not put a report out. We want it to be almost an historical record of just what people have done and how people have risen to the challenge and also how we can improve in future years.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

I could not agree more. I think in history when our children are grown up and telling their children about the year 2020, the Island's resilience was one of the reasons why we are in a good place that we are in today and we obviously pay tribute to everybody who has done that. Minister, while you are here and listening to this, given that what we are hearing through the updates, and again with the situation with mental health support, as a Government, as a Minister, can you see anything that deserves a push for more funding towards anything coming out of this update, but particularly on mental health? Will you be talking to your colleagues and saying: "Maybe we should be doing more funding, doing more?"

**The Minister for Social Security:**

When would people not want more money or need more money? I was really surprised how far this strategy had come in the pandemic year, all the people that were on board and this worked well with the community task force that I had led as well and we tried to get out as much in different languages. Deputy Alves was on that and helped greatly, with great suggestions, but I think the next stage may identify where there is going to be more money but I cannot say at the moment. We are a little bit behind. We have a new man started, as Paul has just said, and we have fulfilled everything that we wanted to do in 2021. Do not forget, in 2020, there has never been a penny for the disability strategy. It is great that we have some money. It is great the money is there committed right through to this Government Plan and it is there now and it will be a very silly Minister that did not carry on fighting for money and keep this going and make it better.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**



We know as part of the work, and it has been talked about by Paul, the Disability Awareness Working Group, so could you just provide some more information on that, i.e. the consultation of the group, and whether you intend the group to be in place, for how long and maybe the terms of reference as well?

**Director of Local Services:**

The group was established and agreed October last year and it is a mix of officers, it is also equalled by experience, which I think is imperative, as well as charities. We have non-government organisations leading all of our workstreams with support with the project manager. What we would like to get to is that we want people who give their time to support us, to see an outcome. We are going to use the disability inclusion officers and the project manager to support the chair, to write the terms of reference, to look at where they want to focus. Their meetings will be up to the group. We are anticipating maybe it is every 8 weeks. Again, the budget that we have alluded to, they will be able to look at how that is spent to deliver the strategy and their outcomes. The model that we want to do is one of empowerment. It cannot just be sat in Broad Street doing it. If it is to get real traction we need to listen to Islanders who have a disability. We also need to listen to those people who work with disabled Islanders on a daily basis. In terms of the methodology it is all around participation and it is ongoing. Where we are with the strategy at moment, it gets us to a certain level but if we are going to be aspirational, which I think Jersey should be, we need to be listening and looking for Jersey solutions to make sure that we are raising awareness so that it becomes the norm. Some of that is around taking away some of the myth. There is a danger sometimes that maybe some employers or others are afraid to say the wrong thing or: "What can we do?" A big part of this is providing people with the stepping stones to be able to provide employment, to be able to open their sports clubs, to be able to consider their facilities, to make sure that they are accessible for all. I think we have a really good opportunity to do that now. In terms of how long this will be, I think it is going to be ongoing. We will have different levels of inclusion. We are not at the start of the journey because I think we have seen how supportive our community is. It is maybe that we just need to work out some of those roadmaps to make it even more aware and more inclusive.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Part of that listening to people of the community is also including them in our political world as well. I am sure one of your officers, Anthony, would have great insight from his, from his campaign. You mentioned politics at the beginning so what work is going on to make sure that if those members of our Island, our society, want to stand in the election that they will be supported to do so to make it equal for them to participate in things like hustings and access to information, et cetera? Also any follow-up audits of the building. How friendly is Broad Street for anybody with a disability? We know there was one on the States Assembly I think back in 2011, 2008, could be wrong, but it has been done; so any work around that would be helpful.

**The Minister for Social Security:**

I might not have said it completely, so after this meeting I have been asked by one of our inclusion officers to meet with myself, the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture and the Constable of St. Helier to talk exactly about that. What do people need? What are they going to tell us; I will report back after but I do not know exactly what the meeting ... but it is just great to be going to the meeting and to hear what ... there may be some past information but also going forward and everyone who has got a different disability how could the system that we use through the Greffe and everything help ... not even help but encourage more people with a disability to stand? I will tell you what I find out when I see you. You do not have to wait for a quarterly hearing but it is good stuff; I am really looking forward to going.

**Director of Local Services:**

Just to clarify, Deputy, it is going to be with Ant Lewis. The idea is that Ant has obviously been there, he knows the challenges. Certainly talking to Ant and the team we feel that this has to be an action prior to an election otherwise maybe it becomes a little bit of a tick box. Obviously with an election on the horizon it would seem timely to start to understand what those challenges are and encourage people to participate and provide all the support that they need.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Could you quickly answer for those who act as Broad Street, for those who are not in Government, are there any challenges with the move into that temporary building? What are the challenges? Have you had that feedback from the officers yet?

**Director of Local Services:**

We have not, but we are working very closely with Liberate. They have done a number of audits. We work in partnership with them. It is a fantastic organisation and the scheme they are doing is auditing buildings. I know they have been down here to the library and audited us and provided some really helpful feedback. Just looking at my notes, I think they did 14 prior to lockdown and they have another schedule coming forward. I am not sure if they have done Broad Street, I can certainly find out, but the idea is that probably buildings will be done and audits will be provided and then measures can be put in place to remedy any issues.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Was there not one done, are you aware of, when Broad Street was selected as the temporary premises when the move was made to Broad Street that part of that move was: "Well, let us make sure it is fully accessible for everybody"? That could be one of the findings that come forward - I do not want to pre-empt things - that whenever Government takes a hold of the building it is not done

afterwards, it is done at the same time. If that building is not fully accessible for anybody then that is not the building.

**Director of Local Services:**

I am not aware if it is. Property is not really my strong point unfortunately but I can certainly find out.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

It will be good to know. That is it from me. Back to the chair now who is going to ask questions around the Government Plan.

[10:30]

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

In relation to the third recommendation to provide the panel with a report detailing the outcome of the 2019 scoping work in respect of the financial independence in old age project, please can you advise whether the scoping work for this project has now been resumed?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

No, we are no further forward than we were last time. It has been one of those things that again it could be swept up in the capacity benefits but we have not scoped it; no, there is no more work being done on it at all. It is all due to COVID and all the massive other bits of work we now have to do.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

What you are saying is that you no longer have the necessary resources available to review the work completed or to plan to resource this project and ensure a report is presented to the panel?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

Yes.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

And that will not change?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

As I said, going forward, we might be able to incorporate some of it in the big review on incapacity benefits but we are not sure. It was a very tight timetable at the beginning of my ministry. It was going great guns and then COVID and it just did not work out with meeting on Teams and we did not realise how long it would be. Then you have got to pick up completely, I would say start again.

Not start again but we had Deputy Tadier on as well; he is not there now. But it is one of those that I cannot see what I needed to get done, would never bring regulations, bring in principle and then regulations and whatever, and then maybe again start in 2 years' time because that is what I think they have done in Guernsey. But, no, it is just not going anywhere now and we are in March 2021, I cannot see anything coming forward.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

What are you going to do with the work that has already been done on this?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

We had an interim draft report. You know when you get one of them reports that tells you basically that this is how it is, this is how we are, where we are and there are some sort of suggestions. Again, as I said to you many times, it is all about people and employers and the Government taking more money out of the wage packets. With COVID it just did not seem to ... it was not something I could push, we have got so many other massive reviews to come out of this, so it is just one of them unfortunately. It needs perhaps the new Minister to really champion it and go with it.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Yes, I have to say, Minister, I am a little confused. We have already done some scoping work on it. It is now sort of parked. What is going to happen with it in the future? It cannot just be parked, is what I am asking. What is going to happen with the information that you have already got and the work that has already been done with it? Surely we are not just going to park it and dump it in a corner somewhere.

**The Minister for Social Security:**

No, as I say, it is there. It is a smaller report and a big piece of work would have been done on the back of that. The big piece of work had to stop because we just have not got officers at the moment and thinking about where the money would come from. That is there, if the next Minister wants to pick it up the piece of work it is there and it is a base, that is all I can say. It is a base to tell you what is and then now the difficult question is: who pays? Will it be across and how much, it has to be meaningful, if you start out at 20? Then why would you get the buy-in at 20 if it is only the employee then it is not being the employer? Some countries do governments as well. So it is all about paying into a pot of money. You would not think it was that hard but there are so many ways this could be done. But at the end of the day it is money out of people's pockets. We are trying to keep money in people's pockets so they can spend it in the local economy.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Effectively, what you are saying is, is that nothing will be done in relation to financial independence in old age until mid to the end of 2022 when there is a new Minister.

**The Minister for Social Security:**

If that is the new Minister's priority as well, I cannot put words into a new Minister's ... it might not be their priority. But, yes, that will be the earliest, I would imagine, to it being picked up.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Okay, thank you. In relation to the fourth recommendation made by the panel to ensure that the pilot scheme for the care needs at home project recommences as soon as appropriate, have you developed a plan for recommencing client home visits once COVID-19 restrictions are relaxed?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

We spoke about this at my weekly meeting a couple of weeks ago and it is just one of those things, that many, many of these people are very delicate and vulnerable and the plan is we need to speak to them, we need to walk them through, we need to understand their needs, what are their extra needs being at home on long-term care? It is going slowly and as soon as things can open up a bit more, we are not supposed to be going in other people's homes at the moment. Would we go into vulnerable people's homes to talk to them about money? They have got to feel very comfortable, it is a very small team, they know the people that they feel comfortable speaking to at my department and there are a couple of adult social workers as well fallen ill. Again, I am sorry but it has not travelled that far from when I spoke to you in November.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Are you developing a plan to recommence home visits or not?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

Yes, absolutely. We know exactly who they are, we know the people need to go in. We are not going to put them in any more ... some of these people, as I say, are very vulnerable because of what is wrong with them and they have got anxieties and then they have got to let people in their home to discuss money. The plan is there and they know who they are and we are just taking it quite gently at the moment.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Okay. Do you have a communications plan to re-engage with clients and their families once it is appropriate to recommence client home visits?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

Yes, but they will speak to the people they normally speak to on a regular basis, so I do not need to be going out in the wider world and making a big advert. The people know who they are, they talk to them regularly. It is about getting the work done, showing that there are practical things in their homes, Deputy, that some need help with.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Okay, thank you. I will now move on to the Jersey Care Model and Deputy Alves, thank you.

**Deputy C.S. Alves:**

In relation to the first recommendation made by the panel following its review of the Government Plan of 2021 to 2024, to keep the panel informed of any progress made in relation to a new funding model for primary care and a review of the H.I.F. (Health Insurance Fund) to enable sufficient scrutiny of both pieces of work, please can you provide an update on the development of a new model for sustainable health funding?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

I have met with the Minister for Health and Social Services once. It is not going very well today, is it? That has not gone very far either. We need a whole new health model. Because of the pandemic last year P.125 is being funded from the H.I.F., that is why I need to look at the H.I.F. There is money coming out of the H.I.F. also to help kick start the other parts of the healthcare model. The work needs to be done. My camera is on.

**Deputy C.S. Alves:**

Yes, we can see you and hear you, Minister.

**The Minister for Social Security:**

Yes, so that is the H.I.F., the health care model, yes, we are paying for the health scheme at the moment. We probably could be a bit further forward but we are where we are. I have only met the Minister for Health and Social Services once this year, 2 weeks ago, to discuss sustainable funding for healthcare.

**Deputy C.S. Alves:**

You have mentioned then that obviously you have met with the Minister for Health and Social Services, can you advise how the work has been allocated between yourself, the Minister for Health and Social Services and Treasury and Resources? Have you met with Treasury and Resources as well or just the Minister for Health and Social Services?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

No. But, the way I look at it is we collect money more than ... I only need to know what the actual health plan complete is and what the bill would be and then we will find out how we could fund it. That does need input from all those 3 Ministers but the main thing it is a new healthcare model and it will not be able to be sustained, I would say, by the H.I.F. Are the doctors going to work the same way as they work? Are they going to work closer with the Government? People, if they cannot get their procedure done or need to see a follow-up at the hospital, they do not want to pay for it in the doctor's surgery in total, yes, we know all of that, so we need a fund that does that. It is money coming out of the hospital or into the G.P.s (general practitioners), is it? I do not know. Well, 4 or 5 years ago there was a proposition to the Assembly for a sustainable health fund and it lost by one vote but you cannot take that back to the Assembly until you know what you want, the cost and where. I would say that is more the Health's work and then we can look at something that you need to know the cost before you can find out how you can fund it.

**Deputy C.S. Alves:**

Okay, thank you, Minister. Can you tell us when will a decision be made as to the future use or the structure of the H.I.F.? Have you got a timeline?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

I have not got a timeline but it is quite urgent. In conjunction with the Health, we have to keep looking at the H.I.F. because, as I say, we are spending money out of it, of course. Money is always going into it but we have spent more than we normally do. Again, I wanted to know exactly where the H.I.F. stood and the Social Security Fund before July this year and I am pushing for that day. I want something to be organised and ready before the summer recess and, hopefully, then everyone will know, like Scrutiny know first and the rest of the Assembly, and anything changing on those 2 would have to come to the Assembly.

**Deputy C.S. Alves:**

In relation to P.125 of 2019, the affordable access to primary care scheme, it was advised in a joint letter to the panel from yourself and the Minister for Health and Social Services on 8th February that you have agreed to divert £1.75 million of additional funding from the Health Insurance Fund to support the affordable access to primary care scheme. Please, can you advise how you, in your role as Minister for Social Security, oversee and monitor the use of the Social Security Fund for health and social care projects?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

If you remember, P.125 was a proposition early on and that asked for a sustainable funding mechanism. Because of the pandemic and everything else we never got there but we knew we had made a commitment, as well as in the Government Plan, to help the financially vulnerable ease of

access to G.P.s. Temporary again, that is £1.75 million, can we afford it? Yes, we can. Can I step in and do it? Yes, we did. That is where we were and that is where the money has come from.

**Deputy C.S. Alves:**

You mentioned there it was to look at the financially vulnerable, have you looked at the other vulnerable people as well, so like the medically vulnerable and the socially vulnerable as well or have you just solely concentrated on the financially vulnerable?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

We did because of the time running out but you will find it in the financially vulnerable level, the socially vulnerable and there will be vulnerable people who have an illness. But, yes, we have got it started, we need some more statistics on it going forward. It started on 10th December, we are now 8th March but we do know that, a few figures for you, Deputy, around 900 consultations each week since it started and out of them 800 would be a child or a child with a parent, so a child, probably more a teenager. If we project them figures it could be 47,000 use it and it is against 45,000 this year.

[10:45]

But it is very early to judge whether are people going more because it is COVID and it is telephone or are people going less because it is COVID? It is giving us, my office has said on Friday, some really, really good rich data that we can plan for and maybe expand out to. But this has all got to go in conjunction with the new healthcare model because we do know that G.P.s will all be asked, and I think really want to be asked to do a lot more specialist things in their surgeries. They are all a lot bigger now, they are quite big surgeries; they want nurses and things like that. It is a start, we got there in the end after months of the pandemic but it is a start. I am really pleased we have got it up and running and it is helping people. But it will be the judgment at the end of the year, I think, to see if we have really increased the use of G.P.s.

**Deputy C.S. Alves:**

Obviously you have mentioned there appointment numbers, you advised us that the scheme would support 12,000 Islanders who receive the income support and pension-plus benefits. Can you advise how many people to date have utilised the scheme?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

I can only up to date, so weekly it is an average of 900 consultations.

**Deputy C.S. Alves:**



But how many people is that because you could, potentially, have somebody that is having more than one consultation?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

I did not know, yes ... so it is 4,800 consultations but I do not know if someone has seen them 5 times. The balance of this is once we can operate everything down we might be able to do that better as well, finding it. We need those statistics because if somebody is seeing them lots and lots of times, they might have another problem, then that would be able to be ... try and find that out from that data as well.

**Deputy C.S. Alves:**

Okay, thank you for that. I am going to hand back to the chair, who will be asking some questions on the reopening of the Customer and Local Services office at La Motte Street, benefit claims and unemployment.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Following the Government's recent reconnection of restaurants and non-essential retail outlets, the C.L.S. (Customer and Local Services) building remains closed to drop-in customers. Please, can you advise at what stage of the Government's reconnection programme do you think the C.L.S. building at La Motte Street will be reopened?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

I pass this building very often because I have got a friend who lives round the corner but, to me, since all the Parish Halls opened up it has been open. There has been a lady with a hi-viz jacket on the door but more recently, Deputy, you can go in the door, the welcome desk has been brought forward. It has all got Perspex up but you do not have to wait out in the cold if you have got an appointment. Yes, to me, it has not really been shut at all, as it managed to spend nearly £500 million, so that was quite amazing. But it is open, 2 doors, you walk in, if you need to speak to someone, there is a post box outside, you go out the left door. We were getting them, just a walk in, footfall of around 1,000 people before COVID and that is not manageable; that is absolutely not manageable safely. It cannot keep my staff, who are paying out the money by the way, safe and then most people now, they have done it once online, they have phoned up and they have had a conversation. We are getting very, very few appointments to come in, very few. Yes, it is open and it is paying out money and you can walk in there.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Right, so just to confirm, if I walk to La Motte Street this afternoon I can go in and see someone at La Motte Street in relation to whichever matter I want to see them on, whether that be in relation to my tax, planning or social security?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

No, ideally, we are saying go and pick the phone up but some people have been trying to get in and we do not want to keep them out in the rain. There are people there, as I said, on the door, we call them the welcome hosts, will tell you: "No, you do not need to come here. Yes, did you want an appointment?" But that would probably all be done on the phone. Then you are probably going to ask me, will it ever go back to how it was? That answer I cannot give you because, to me, I want the most efficient. If 1,000 people were wandering in there daily and now most of it can be done on the phone, booked appointments or online, we need to look at our whole business model.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Fully accepting that, Minister, that one positive out of the pandemic may be that people will have reverted to using telephone calls, online, et cetera, et cetera but this is a public service and I still think there are people who wish to be able to arrive in La Motte Street and enter and go into Social Security. Will we have a system whereby people can still just go into Social Security as and when they choose?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

The doors are open and if that is what they want to do in their day, the doors are open but if they want to see someone, make an appointment, if it is about your work do it online, and most people are. There is so much that La Motte Street is doing that it does not need people. We are spending millions and millions on the co-funded payroll scheme and that is all coming out of that down there. But people do not need to go in, they fill the form in online and they get their money and the officers are working safely.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Yes, can I just interject ...

**The Minister for Social Security:**

I do not know the angle you are coming from but I think after COVID we need to have a good look at what we need to do. It was never a great building, Deputy, for income support claimants having the other 60 lot behind you sitting there hearing all your information. Now we book the appointments, it is in a quiet room and most people still do not need that but some complicated cases or if there is a tragedy. I have got people because friends have said to me ... I have said: "No, no, you can have an appointment. If you feel you are not up to it, you need to be taking your everything because you

have literally just lost your partner” and obviously they go ahead. But it is to me in a much more better structure because you have not got everybody in the same place at the same time having a ...

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Thank you, Minister. Fully appreciating that the building is open but when we say about this is that the likes of the banks are open, Citizens Advice has opened up in recent weeks saying that people can now go in and see someone. Not all of our population will be able to use the online facility, not all will be able to use the facilities and we still may have people who simply want to be able to go to La Motte Street. They may very well work in town or, as a matter of course, think: “I need to do something and so I will pop in.” Are you saying that we will never go back to that situation whereby somebody can just pop in to speak to somebody without an appointment?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

No, and I am not there every day, Mary. I would like Ian just to come in for a few minutes because he sees the type of people who are coming in daily and so I have been down there for different reasons and I just think it ... I am not saying that, I am saying we need to make it as pleasant an experience and that is why it is now called Customer and Local Services. It is all about the interaction with the customer and making sure that they have the best experience. But I will hand you over to Ian, thanks.

**Director General, Customer and Local Services:**

Thank you, Minister. I think it is important to reflect upon the types of customer we do get and those who do need to see people. For example, I think the sort of customer you are describing there, Deputy, would be perhaps people who were more vulnerable, who did not want to be put in a difficult position to come into any building with other people in an uncontrolled way. We are trying to answer all those needs, both the needs of the population who wants to do things online and we have obviously a survey from 2018 that said three-quarters of people did want to do things online to those people who do want to see people for an appointment. That had been a previous request from many States Members and members of the public, they would prefer to have an appointment and turn up at a designated time. We are trying to balance off all those things. COVID has set us a whole range of challenges, not least the fact that the financial support that the Minister’s benefit schemes provide, particularly in relation to income support, have been significant increases in numbers of claimants. We have been trying to balance off the public service, we need to provide to those people by getting money out quickly to businesses and also individuals and also balancing off the public health concerns. Going forward, we would be looking to continue to hear the voice of the customer and seek evidence of that, who does need to receive a service face-to-face? Balance that off with the public health concerns for everybody else and as well as our colleagues who do some great work in

getting their commitments, ensure that people receive their benefits. I think we are looking to see how things develop and just obviously the reconnection strategy was only released on Friday. We would be looking to see that, how that develops and how we develop the service at the same time. But, rest assured, anybody who wants to speak to somebody can do so over the phone. There are online forms that exist for most of our services and they work pretty well now. If somebody wants to see someone face to face they can book an appointment and will happily see somebody face to face for an appointment about any issue.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Okay, thank you. Just on that note, have you received any feedback from users of Customer and Local Services about the ongoing closure of La Motte Street office to drop-in visitors? Have you received any feedback in relation to that?

**Director General, Customer and Local Services:**

Yes, we have had feedback and we have also had lots of positive feedback that people have found it much easier to pick up the phone and speak to us and to be able to do that over the phone or online, so you have lots of positive feedback on that. Obviously some people are concerned they cannot perhaps do what they used to do but we can answer most people's questions online. If you spend any time seeing the people who pop into La Motte Street, most people are just trying to put something through a letterbox and would prefer to hand it to somebody, rather than put it into a post box, for example. We have very small numbers of appointments because most people find that they can get their answers over the phone.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Okay, thank you. I will now move on to benefit claims and unemployment. Please, can you provide an update on the number of non-COVID-related benefit claims and the number of benefit claims related to COVID-19?

**Director General, Customer and Local Services:**

Yes. The unemployment numbers are coming out every month now from the Stats Unit as part of the economic indicators report and the latest one should be out, I think, in the next few days. What we are seeing in the last month has been certainly that higher number of what we would describe as job-starts; that is where we are helping people who are registered as unemployed to find work. We are also seeing quite a big upturn in the number of vacancies that are being advertised on the Government website for jobs in Jersey, so some positive signs there. I think we should see, hopefully, a reduction in unemployment when the numbers are produced by the Stats Unit, but that is for the Stats Unit to confirm but it is positive, as I say. We have also seen in the same time and perhaps a slight drifting downwards of income support claims, which had come down quite a bit

since last May, but obviously that reduction has stopped because of the circuit-breaker and, hopefully, that will again pick up and continue to drift downwards in the months ahead.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Thank you. Just can I confirm with others because it might be on my screen but could others see the last speaker, as in their camera was on? Thank you. Because obviously I could not see on my own screen, so I just wanted to double-check, it is just a reminder. Moving on to the next question, in relation to unemployment, please can you provide an update on the numbers of registered actively-seeking work persons in Jersey?

[11:00]

**Director General, Customer and Local Services:**

It was 1,450 when the report was published for January at the start of February. Hopefully, it will be a bit lower when the Stats Unit produce their report in the next few days. We are hoping certainly to start to see that come down over the next few months as those job vacancies, which are obviously now being advertised, as people reignite their businesses and open back up again, start to hire people for the months ahead.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

We note from your recently lodged 2021 Business Plan that you intend to provide additional support for people who have become unemployed as a result of the pandemic, this includes providing one-to-one advice and support to all registered actively-seeking work clients and ensuring additional support schemes are created to support displaced workers. Has this work already begun and, if not, when is it likely to, please?

**Director General, Customer and Local Services:**

Yes. In the Government Plan 2021 to 2024 there was a business case that was submitted and obviously was approved by the States to fund additional monies for income support benefits. That also included additional monies for colleagues to be able to administer those benefits, to make sure we continue to pay out money quickly to claimants to reduce any hardship. But also some further employment advisers to be able to provide the support to the increased numbers of unemployed people we have seen since the pandemic started. We operate a system with income support, it is a work benefit, i.e. you are meant to be looking for work to be able to claim it and there are obviously exceptions to that, for example, you can have young children or if you are unwell. But the majority who can work, we support to try and get work through employment advisers, as employment advisers will help with things like C.V.s (curriculum vitae), help with applications for jobs, also help with interview practise and some small training interventions with our colleagues in Skills Jersey.

There is a package there that exists and obviously the further away you are from the labour market, for example, you have been out of work a long time, the more intense support you might need to keep the motivation high and keep you going to keep applying for jobs; that is what we are trying to do. The other issue is the longer you have been out of work, then you become less attractive, in some aspects, to employers, who might prefer to recruit people, as always, who are already in work. We, therefore, seek to help particularly long-term unemployed people get perhaps more support and, therefore, help to get those jobs. We do look at employer incentives to be able to help support the initial cost of recruiting somebody who has been out of work a long time, who has got all of those particular barriers to work, so the perceived risk by the employer is lessened because we can support them financially and, hopefully, get that person into a job that they can then sustain and have all the benefits of being in work that you get in terms of self-esteem, in terms of well-being, in terms of your position perhaps with your family and also perhaps they are less reliant on benefits.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Okay, thank you. At the last quarterly hearing on 12th November 2020 the panel asked about collection of data on persons carrying out some form of unpaid work, such as caring for children but who are not registered as actively seeking work. Please, can you provide some examples where you think that your department could improve data collection in this area?

**Director General, Customer and Local Services:**

We do obviously collect data, based upon people's employment through contributions and through benefits. If you have somebody who is not working but perhaps caring for somebody, then they will not necessarily be in our data, in our records for those obvious reasons. Because they are not employed and they are perhaps caring formally for somebody. But I think the data that the panel was after will probably be answered by the census, which is about to start later on this month because that gives a very comprehensive review of what people are doing, how they are contributing to Island life and that should provide the most current and full up-to-date information that you could possibly want in relation to this question. Hopefully, that will provide those answers for the panel.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Do you think improved data collection could be used by your department to help source skilled local residents who are not working but also not registered as actively seeking work?

**Director General, Customer and Local Services:**

I think it has been interesting to see the volunteer response during the pandemic, so we now have 3,500 volunteers who have registered with Connect Me. In a way it has been good in some respects obviously that they have not all been called upon as much as they probably would have thought at the start of the pandemic. That is a slightly different angle to your question but I think that is a very

positive start. There are opportunities for people who are not working but who have skills to help support others and we have a tremendous voluntary end of the charitable sector where lots of people do get involved of all sorts, whether they have high levels of skills or low levels of skills. That is one of the strengths of the Island and that is something that we hope to continue in the work that Paul described earlier on in this hearing. We hope to continue to work with those groups to be able to use that good nature and that community support to provide support to Islanders and other organisations who do need that support.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Thank you. I will hand over to Deputy Pamplin who is going to ask questions in relation to ministerial responsibilities.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

He will indeed. Thank you, Chair. Minister, obviously you noted that your Assistant Minister is now an Assistant Minister for Children and Education, is in another building having another hearing. Please, do not tune over and watch him, stay with us to the end here but he is not with you today. Do you have any plans or are you allowed to have another Assistant Minister like you had previously when you had Deputy Maçon and Deputy Southern, and then Deputy Southern went and then you had Deputy Wickenden and Deputy Maçon, now Deputy Maçon went? Will you be asking for another Assistant Minister to support you?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

I could do, with all my Assistant Ministers I work very well. I am a very inclusive Minister. If I know anything, they know anything, they come to all my meetings. You are right, Deputy Wickenden phoned me on Friday and he said: "Deputy Maçon and you are literally in Scrutiny at the same time." It is Deputy Maçon's first Scrutiny hearing in his role as the Minister for Children and Education: "If you feel like you need to be there, that is fine." He never really answers that much questions here and he can support me. He supports the Chief Minister as well when he goes to Scrutiny. I may have another Assistant Minister only because I think of a stream of work that might work well but I need to speak to the Chief Minister and the actual Minister themselves before that happens, but with like a year to go it might not need it. At the moment I am fine with Deputy Wickenden.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Minister, just going off on a tangent, is this ministerial system working? I know this is a big question and this is a political question because is it right that we have got clashes? I know that is something behind the scenes we could always maybe look to the future to make sure Scrutiny hearings are not clashing but how do you think it looks like with this mishmash of assistants and ministerial? Is this working? Because here we are, very important quarterly hearing, first of the year and you do not

have an Assistant Minister to support you, and we know Deputy Maçon with all of his skills and education and now he is obviously the Education, things happen. But is this working?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

It is working, yes, Deputy; I think it is working great. To be fair, as I say, in a Scrutiny hearing the majority of the time the questions will be directed to me. Deputy Wickenden can manage something in his portfolio, it might not necessarily be here on this portfolio. He might know something about digital, he can always help me; he is very supportive. As I say, I do not hide anything from my Assistant Ministers. We had a real big churn, did we not, we had a vote of no confidence? We had people leave and we are now all settled down and we all know where we are.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Yes, indeed. On that, so in terms of Deputy Maçon's role as Skills Jersey, is he still responsible for that? Is he still working on that or is that something you are looking at delegating to Deputy Wickenden or another?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

It works well because I know about it and I work really, really well with Deputy Maçon. The Skills Jersey work is across our department and money ... Ian says it is not in the department.

**Director General, Customer and Local Services:**

Just to jump in, the questions about Skills Jersey; Skills Jersey is part of the Education brief, so I think, Minister, Back to Work is ...

**The Minister for Social Security:**

Yes, sorry, my confusion because Deputy Maçon has always done my Back-to-Work figures, who is seeking work and everything like that. He was also already Assistant Minister for Education, so that was a very good stream and he would say: "Education, we are doing this, we need more money for this." He would keep me up to date on everything sort of to back us up. But, yes, now very unfortunate, we lost a fantastic Assistant Minister but I think 2 ministries he is going to be a fantastic Minister.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Just to be clear, in your original answer you were going to speak to the Chief Minister about possibly getting another Assistant Minister, just so I got that straight.

**The Minister for Social Security:**



Yes, in my thinking, yes, and I am not sure. Yes, I need to speak to the Chief Minister and the person I am thinking about, which may be synergy that I think may help Social Security in the last year but it might not work, so we will see. But it is already somebody who is a Minister, I would like to make them my Assistant Minister as well.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

You cannot give us a little hint on who that is?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

No, because I have not spoken to anyone, it is just in my head, so I need to speak to people. Sorry about that, I am not trying to be secretive. It is something I have been mulling over for about a week or 2.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Okay. On this whole issue of your portfolio and why I touched on the ministries, interesting because on the Government website there is a link for each Minister and their department but there is not one for you, Minister. There is the Customer and Local Services website but it does not feature your profile and I know we have these blurred lines of who is responsible for C.L.S. But it is interesting that you, as a Minister, do not feature on the Government website as your portfolio and what you are responsible for. This is why I go back to where the public sometimes get confused of what a Minister does and could be just a technical oversight, but I am just on the website now and I cannot see you. But there is the Minister for Treasury and Resources, there is the Minister for External Relations and their department. This is why I touch upon this and I know there has been the target operating model and things have changed over the last 3 years but why do you think that is?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

No, I looked at the same website and it says C.L.S. Department, it said I am not the Minister for C.L.S. There is so, so much more that goes on in La Motte Street; passports, planning, the co-funded payroll now. But everything that is statutory under me, like the Social Security Fund, pensions, income support but, no, my name is not up there. I was not precious about it but I could talk to whoever designed the website and they may just want to tweak that one a bit. Because you are right, every other Minister is on there at some point and it does not always sit in a straight line. We only looked at that on Friday. It was Friday, was it not? Yes, we looked at it and whoever is designing in the Government here maybe will want to just tweak that. They have put all the other Ministers in, like the superintendent registrar and they have put C.A.B. (Citizens Advice Bureau) and everything like that, fall under different parts of C.L.S. But if I am not there and they want to know what I am the Minister for, we can straighten that out. I think that is a good point for pointing that out to us, thank you.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Yes, there are other portfolios not there, the Minister for Children and Education is not there but that was a new role. But, again, I could go on for ever and ever about communication, as I often do, but I will pause here. Because we are live obviously and people have been messaging about the La Motte Street questions that the chair was asking. Can I just quickly clarify something that has come up? What would be the circumstances for turning somebody away? They have arrived at La Motte Street; would the circumstances be they have not phoned ahead, they have not got an appointment? What would be the decision-making for turning somebody away if that happened?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

Deputy, before COVID you remember you asked us some questions, where do you introduce and welcome people?

[11:15]

At the welcome desk. About three-quarters of the people who turned up at La Motte Street just asked a question, they were either in the wrong place, they did not need to do this, that and the other. Working on that principle, we will not be turning anyone away. There is somebody there now to see them, there is a letterbox there: "I want this, I want to pick up a form." You can do that online. There are people there to speak to them and: "I think I need an appointment." "We cannot give you an appointment today." I would imagine that is the answer. I do not work there, do I?

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

No.

**The Minister for Social Security:**

"I cannot give you an appointment today." But, as I say, the system has been working really, really well. What was the question? Why would I turn someone away? If somebody phoned in and asked, I would not turn them away.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

No, it is just that obviously members of the public are watching and they have just asked. It was 2 similar questions about being turned away when they have turned up, so maybe Ian can help us here. I do not know the case's scenario, hence why I am asking the rounded question without going into specifics. If somebody turned up and was turned away, I will just skim through the message, something about being referred to Citizens Advice Bureau. Yes, any insight on that would be helpful, as clearly the public are watching and want to know.

**Director General, Customer and Local Services:**

Yes. The Minister is right, when we had welcome hosts then people would often turn up. I would not use the word “turned away” but find out they did not need to come in in the first place to do what they wanted to come in for. Even then we were trying to help support people by not having them sit down and wait unnecessarily to find out that they then would not need to come in. At the moment if somebody wants to come in, turns up and they want to speak to somebody, let us say, about their sickness claim, then they will not be able to speak to anybody unless they have an appointment. We would be encouraging that person to phone and book an appointment or just phone up and get their answers, so that is what we would be doing. The difference we have made in the last few weeks has been the people now that wait outside, they can come in, there is like a corridor in some respects that people can flow through. They can speak to our welcome host colleagues and they are protected also through a Perspex screen, like you have seen in other organisations, and to find out why that person has turned up. In many cases it is because they just want to hand something in and they could just put it through the post box and that is accessible, therefore, 24/7. But some people do like to hand things in and, therefore, they can do that. But if somebody wanted to just get some detailed advice, and the example you have mentioned there is Citizens Advice Bureau, and that is the sort of referral we might make if someone has issues perhaps around financial matters or about tenancy, then we would still be making that recommendation over the phone or face to face, if that was the right referral for that person. But if somebody was coming in, let us say, to speak to Tax, again, tax colleagues are operating an appointment system. You can call and book an appointment. But if you turn up wanting to see someone there and then, then we will be suggesting to you that you either need to phone to book an appointment or email them. I think it is a balance that we have to try and find at the moment between helping provide good service, helping the public’s demand to have more services online and to be more accessible but also their own personal concerns about health, but also the Government’s guidance on public health, and that is why we are just trying to find that right balance at the moment. We get good feedback, good customer feedback. We have good feedback on our web forms and that is very positive.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Yes, just to be clear, so if somebody did turn up and somebody was free and there was the opportunity to possibly deal with the person because there was somebody free, instead of turning them away, so to speak, that they go, hang on, if somebody is available, they are, they can see you now, is that part of the process?

**Director General, Customer and Local Services:**

Yes. If somebody wanted to see someone face to face and there was an appointment that was free, either then or later on that day, for example, the next day, then we would book an appointment. But

likewise that person could have phoned up and got through and booked an appointment over the phone, rather than walk through town in the way that perhaps are suggesting.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Agreed. But I think this is apples and pears because some people it might just happen in the moment, they have got no time to phone, they need to quickly rush round to do something. But I think all common sense comes into play. That is it from me. Back to the chair who is going to finish off. Thanks.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Something occurred to me as a result of the questions that have just been asked by Deputy Pamplin, insomuch as that C.L.S. is not the responsibility or does not come under the responsibility of the Minister for Social Security. Therefore, who does it come under? My question would be, unusually is, is that we have been discussing this morning about the reopening of La Motte Street but, ultimately, who makes that decision? Because La Motte Street C.L.S. does not come under the Minister for Social Security, so who decides whether Social Security will go back to business as normal?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

I am obviously responsible, as I have said, for lots of the payments that happen in La Motte Street. But, yes, we have had this before I think, Deputy, that C.L.S. does not have a direct Minister. But Ian Burns, who runs C.L.S. and is the D.G. (Director General), reports directly to the chief exec, also to other Ministers. He has got the library, which is Education, the superintendent registrar, which is Home Affairs. It is confusing but the idea of putting all the customer-led things together was the experience for the customer wherever they went should be the same and it should be a good experience. As long as I know that that is carrying on, the way that the improvements have been made overall in La Motte Street but also the way benefits and everything are paid and pensions. It might be a different line, Ian could explain but that is the way I ...

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Right. I think basically this is my question; who makes the decision about whether La Motte Street would open again in the same format as it was previously? Whose decision is that?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

I suppose it is an operational question, so I would say the head of operations, which would be Ian Burns.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Effectively, Ian Burns would be responsible for making the decision about whether Social Security would reopen in its same format as it was before, that is all I am asking.

**The Minister for Social Security:**

There would be lots of discussions, I would not say if everything is doing right. I get reports every week on what is happening down at C.L.S. but maybe undermined because of the income support bit, it was C.R.E.S.S. (COVID-19 Related Emergency Support Scheme) et cetera, et cetera. As I say, I get an update on, believe it or not, how many staff have had COVID in that time; it has been very, very little because it has been running so well down there. Weeks before we locked down we were putting people in different teams, some were already working from home. We literally shut C.L.S. probably before the pubs, so that is how organised we were down there, to keep people safe, to make sure they can pay the money out. Because I know there was a lot of anxiety going around, Deputy. There have been people with pensions were not going in their banks or the income support were not coming through and then we have got Ian's team were in 2 weeks putting up a co-funded payroll scheme, scheme 1, so there was loads of work being done. Yes, I think I get where you are going; it is a policy and then there is an operational head and that is Ian Burns.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Yes, I fully accept that but I think the question is, and this is something that I personally would like to know is that, when we are back to however normal becomes normal and we start to reopen all of the Island and all the banks are back, all the shops are back and everything is back and the public say to me or to any other Member of the States Assembly, when is C.L.S. in La Motte Street going to reopen to the public as it was before or if it does not, I want to know who makes the decision that we are going to maybe change the way the public are dealt with within a public office? I just want to know, who makes that decision, please.

**Director General, Customer and Local Services:**

If I can perhaps just jump in there, Chair. The Minister is right, there are policies, operations. I am responsible for operating Customer and Local Services. Before we will make a decision to change something that was significant, then obviously I would be speaking to all my team, we would be speaking to Ministers who were involved. It is not done in isolation but, ultimately, we are making decisions every day about the operation and we do not involve Ministers in all of those decisions. We involve them in the significant things. For example, based upon our observations of customer activity, we changed the way that we had been operating at La Motte Street in the last few weeks. I had those discussions with the Minister for Social Security because the Minister for Social Security has the most footfall of any of the Ministers in terms of activity; either phone calls, benefits, customer activity. The Minister for Social Security, we had that conversation and then the Minister wanted to come and have a look. If the Minister was not happy with how we have designed things and the

customer behaviour that it was driving, then she would have said so and we would have had a conversation about how we could make that better. I think it is just a very practical way about it, of about 8 different Ministers who have different services through Customer and Local Services. They are dealt with out of a number of different buildings, not just La Motte Street, so crematorium, the library, the office of the superintendent registrar, Eagle House, which is just behind La Motte Street, et cetera. There are lots of different buildings and we are trying to do our best across all of those, balancing all those different priorities. The other thing, just quickly if I can just add in, we talk about how things might be in the future, we want things to be better and easier for the public and easier for customers. It does not necessarily mean that things have to be exactly as they were before. Many businesses have changed their approaches, I am sure, and many more will change them further. We need to think about what the public demand is, how we can make things easier for the public, how we can still continue to serve all members in all different segments of the community.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Thank you, Ian, that is exactly what I wanted to find out. I just wanted to have some idea and I am all for making improvements. I think if we are able to make improvements but making sure and ensuring that we do not exclude anybody from the public or anybody feels like they are being excluded, fully accept that, the ways forward in relation to online and people making appointments. In fairness, people know the time of their appointments, et cetera, et cetera, so I fully accept all of that. I just wanted the clarity of knowing if things change, then this is exactly what the public would ask. They would ask: who made that decision, who consulted with who? Therefore, that is why I asked the question. On that note, I think we are pretty much 2 minutes away from our time. I would like to thank the public, for those of you who were listening. I would like to thank the Scrutiny staff who have set this all up. I would like to thank the Minister and all of those that have contributed from Social Security this morning to this public hearing. Also, I would like to thank the remainder of the panel. Thank you and no doubt we will speak again.

**The Minister for Social Security:**

Deputy, I could not hear you for the first 2 or 3 minutes, it was not your fault, it was mine; I had muted. Where is Deputy Southern on your panel now?

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

Deputy Southern only came to the panel in relation to the work in relation to the Jersey Care Model. Once the Jersey Care Model was completed, he decided that he would not continue to work with us in relation to that.

[11:30]

But we decided to remain with the panel of 3 and obviously we have taken the expertise and knowledge of Deputy Doublet in relation to our maternity review for Health and we will do the same for any other reviews that we do. We will probably co-opt other persons. With only 18 months to go we decided that we would continue working as a team of 3.

**The Minister for Social Security:**

Thank you. Because I was looking at your website, I was trying to link into the Health meeting but I saw only 3 of you on there and so I must remember to ask. But you may have said it at the beginning but I did not hear but thanks for the update. That is what it was, that is clear, thank you.

**Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:**

No problem at all. Thank you all very much.

[11:31]