

Response to the proposed Long-Term Care Scheme

General Comment

The Bureau is pleased to respond to the '**Proposed Long-Term Care Scheme**'. The economic climate continues to give policy makers cause for concern and at the Bureau we see how this impacts on individuals and their families. In 2012 the Bureau addressed 12,292 client issues for new and on-going problems. In relation to residential care, we received 33 individual enquiries on this issue.

The Bureau has been involved in the Health and Social Services White Paper, in particular, the development of a Carers Support Service to identify 'hidden carers' and to make better quality information and access to care services available to all.

Taken in this context, we regard the provision of a Long-Term Care Scheme as being pivotal to the overall strategy of allowing individuals to make decisions and choices that are based upon care needs, rather than economic necessity.

However laudable this ambition, there is always a cost attached to any new scheme and the harsh reality is that family budgets will be further 'pinched' in order to fund such a scheme and a balance has to be struck between giving people piece of mind for their care needs and how affordable a rise in Social Security contributions, collected via ITIS, will be for families that have finely balanced finances.

In relation to families that are struggling financially, the start of this year has not given much reason to be confident as the job market continues to suffer. For those who are already mired in the debt spiral, this makes their situation even more precarious. To give this statement some scope, in 2012 the Bureau helped to repair the finances of 278 clients who had an overall indebtedness of just over £5M and 693 advice issues were recorded for new and on-going debt problems.

In relation to the two specific questions raised by the Health, Social Security and Housing Scrutiny Panel.

- **Do you agree with the Long-Term Care Scheme?**

In broad terms, we support the introduction of a forward-thinking scheme that offers some protection for those who have certain income and/or assets from the potentially huge expenses relating to the costs associated with residential care. Although the number of clients who contact the Bureau for advice on this matter is relatively small, for those involved, there is a genuine concern that they may not be able to leave a legacy for their loved ones. All at a time when those involved are having to make stressful and tough decisions concerning their health care needs.

Given the circumstances, outlined above, individuals are prone to making rash and sometimes unwise decisions relating to their income and assets, very often with undesirable and unintended consequences. Usually only deciding to seek advice on the matter after the changes have been made. Therefore, the feedback that we get from our clients in relation to the proposed Long-Term Care scheme is largely positive and the qualifying period and conditions are accepted as being fair.

- **How do you think the scheme will affect those who will be required to contribute?**

The Bureau is regularly contacted by families and individuals for whom any further pressure on their finances, no matter how small, will undoubtedly cause hardship. Whilst many will see the positive aspects of a Long-Term Care Scheme, some, who would not see themselves as benefitting from such a scheme, will not see the positive aspects. Either because the current benefit arrangements may already suit their personal circumstances, or because they do not intend to stay in Jersey and realise that the contribution is non-refundable.

Consequently, a corresponding upwards pressure on pay claims will result and for those on fixed incomes, this may bite even harder if the contribution rate rises after five years. Given Jersey's ageing demographic, I would postulate that a future increase in the contribution rate is highly likely.

To some degree, perhaps individual financial pressures should be squared against emphasis on the 'community' aspect of the scheme.

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