WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY COMMITTEE BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 10th MAY 2005

Question

Has any research has been carried out by the Committee into the medical costs incurred by recipients of Long Term Incapacity Allowance (LTIA) or the previous Invalidity benefit, and, if so, what does it reveal?

Answer

There has not been any specific research on the medical costs of people on benefit, other than HIE. The variety and nature of illness would suggest that medical costs would vary between beneficiaries and even between beneficiaries with the same medical condition. A similar feature was found within the research performed by the Centre for Research into Social Policy into disability which Deputy Southern has received.

Of more practical value to claimants of LTIA is the removal of the requirement for medical certification. This means that visits to the doctor and the expense incurred to satisfy Social Security procedures have been reduced markedly. Coupled with procedures for repeat prescribing which mean that a person can obtain one original and three repeat prescriptions at one time, the medical costs are dependant on the advice of the GP as to frequency of visits rather than the needs of the Employment and Social Security Department.

Members might also like to be reminded of the financial assistance given to claimants and businesses to adapt working environments to help people stay or return to employment with an illness. The old system of benefits did not allow people to work and receive benefit and so was a barrier to work.

In the past the Department has undertaken research into the ailments that appear on medical certificates and these have been published on the website. Unfortunately, until this year this could not be linked to GP visits but with GP surgery computerisation, and with the implementation of the new computer system, this will be possible in the future, once sufficient data has been collected.