



Health and Social Security Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Public Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Social Security

Thursday, 21st April 2022

Panel:

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

Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour

Deputy C.S. Alves of St Helier

Senator S.Y. Mézec

Witnesses:

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

Ms. S. Duhamel - Associate Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance

Mr. P. McGinnety - Director of Local Services

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

Mr. M. MacGregor - Senior Policy Officer, Government of Jersey

[15:00]

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

Good afternoon, this is the final public hearing with the Minister for Social Security with the scrutiny panel, it is 21st April. I am Deputy Mary Le Hegarat, District 3 and 4 of St. Helier and I am the Chair of this panel.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour:

Good afternoon, everybody. Deputy Kevin Pamplin of St. Saviour and I am the Vice Chair of the panel.

Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier:

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

Senator S.Y. Mézec:

Afternoon, everyone, Senator Sam Mézec and I am a member of the panel.

The Minister for Social Security:

Deputy Judy Martin, I am the Minister for Social Security and Deputy for District 1, soon to be known as south.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Good afternoon, panel, Ian Burns, Director General for Customer and Local Services.

Associate Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

Good afternoon, I am Sue Duhamel, I am now Associate Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance Department.

The Minister for Social Security:

There are other officers but we do not know if you will need ... there are subjects that were covered, do you want them to all introduce or introduce when ...

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Those that are likely to speak, if they could introduce themselves, please, that would be helpful.

The Minister for Social Security:

Absolutely.

Director of Local Services:

Good afternoon, everybody, my name is Paul McGinnety, I am Director of Local Services.

The Minister for Social Security:

That is possibly all.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, we will move on. If there is anybody that needs to speak that has not already introduced themselves during the course of events then they can do so just prior to them speaking. Just a reminder that this public hearing works under the same rules as the States Assembly. We are going to kick off with Deputy Pamplin.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes, thank you. Welcome to the States Assembly Building. If you hear coughing around me I am joined by our officers who are in the room with me assisting us live this afternoon. Good afternoon, Minister, we are going to start with that little thing, COVID-19. At the last quarterly hearing in relation to the helpline it was advised that, and I quote: "We are obviously expecting that the requirement for having a helpline to reduce gradually in the months ahead and that is in line with the Government Plan funding arrangements, we have approximately 500,000 for the year but only as we need it. We will be looking to see how we can absorb the calls into business as usual." So a starter for 10, can you provide an update on the volume of calls being handled by the COVID-19 helpline currently and could you break down the reasons for the calls at this stage?

The Minister for Social Security:

I would like to hand this to Ian Burns who has done all the research, has all the calls and can explain it much better than me.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Thank you, Minister. So you are right, we are looking to see how the volumes of customer activity calls changes and over the last few weeks the number of cases has dropped, I think it is 700 today, for example, and as you would expect lower cases has led generally to lower calls. At the moment we are getting between 500 and 600 calls per day. That is higher in the week days and much lower at weekends. About 200 calls a day at the weekend. Customer satisfaction is measured after every call. Customers have the option to tell us what they think about the service they received, it is good, 85 per cent, which is one of the highest in Government. If I give you an example, in December 2021 we had about 28 advisers, this week we have 21 advisers, including some of whom are part time, and we think in about 4 weeks' time that will reduce a bit further down to about 16. So we will be looking to meet our resources with demand that is coming from the public. The actual calls we are getting have not changed that much. They are typically spread between those who have received a positive lateral flow test, who have COVID symptoms and are seeking guidance on booking tests. Those looking for updated vaccination status Q.R. (quick response) codes perhaps for travel and recovery letters as well for the same purpose. Then finally people are booking and amending vaccination appointments. They are the 4 main reasons why we get calls, reasonably evenly spread across those 4 different types and we would expect at the point at which perhaps COVID regulations change and mandatory isolation is removed, on the one hand we might get a peak in calls because there might be more questions but very quickly I would imagine that the number of calls may drop off still further. We are watching it closely and would obviously keep trying to make sure that we are matching demand with our resources.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Is it fair to say, Ian, that the peaks have happened when there has been a change in either the guidelines or being added or reducing, or secondly matching the waves of infection as they come, or is it a mixture of both?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

It is a mixture of both. Sometimes it is something that happens in the U.K. (United Kingdom) or travel that will cause spikes in demand, particularly in the first periods of lockdown and so on, there was lots of concern around that. But now, because there are less announcements and more withdrawals of information, people are making calls about Q.R. codes, for example, that would not have happened 18 months ago but people are getting Q.R. codes so they can travel, but other countries' rules might change. I think, for example, Spain changed their rules. They were going to take unvaccinated travellers in and then they changed it so that would have created a small Jersey flurry in that sense but, of course, moving in and out of the Islands in the U.K. there is no restriction at the moment so that is also a big chunk of calls that we were getting in the past that we do not get any more. Yes, lower cases, easier travel, less restrictions should result in lower calls as you would expect.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Have there been any calls - and this probably peaked during the middle of the pandemic and at various stages when there was issues in terms of infections - of people looking for help in terms of mental health or advice in those sort of areas, they were concerned? Has that continued in any way. Could you point at any data that says people are still phoning up because they are scared, they are nervous, they are worried about infecting their loved ones and suspecting they may lose their job, all those sort of general, I would say, stresses and concerns that people may have?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, that would be ... if we get any of those calls they are very, very small in number. We obviously have the Connect Me service, which we set up at the beginning of the pandemic. That is to give help and assistance to people, help people find help and assistance. That has also dropped off significantly as well. So if we were to get a call up like that we would obviously make a referral to the appropriate services, to mental health for example.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Okay, you mentioned the drop in numbers there went from 28 to 21, if I heard that right?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

How does that work in terms of staffing. Some of them part-time, and I know last time we talked about this there was obviously an idea to absorb these people back into the structure of the day to day business, that there will be jobs for them. Can you update if that is still the case that the 21 advisers, as things slow down, they will be absorbed, where possible, into jobs within the department?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Well, it may not be within Customer and Local Services but everybody who has worked on the helpline on the calls are employed through an agency, therefore they have the ability to apply for jobs in Government and also other jobs as well. So we are managing that group and we are seeing some very good people over the period of the coronavirus helpline leave the coronavirus helpline and join other parts of Government. It has been a real success story of the service and I would expect that to continue with those we have now. Some of the colleagues that are working on the helpline may not want a permanent role, they may wish to just do this to help out the Island and might go back to perhaps what they were doing before. So it is a mixed bag but we are obviously ... the leadership team down there are obviously keeping tabs on everybody and making sure that if opportunities come up, if they are looking for opportunities, that they get the best chance they can to secure a role within Government and hopefully within C.L.S. (Customer and Local Services).

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Sure. Just to be clear for anybody who is new to this, explain what you mean by agency. They are not employed directly by the Government, you directed the agency to fulfil these roles and, just so people understand, it is on-Island as well, it is not a call centre ...

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, absolutely. Everyone is on-Island and are based in St. Helier, or the actual centre is, so yes it is quite typical. There are a number of recruitment agencies on-Island who helped to fill vacancies but also who will help provide resources if you need things on a temporary basis. We have gone to those agencies, which are part of a contractual framework with the Government, so that has gone through a tender process, not just for the coronavirus helpline but for a much wider purpose and we go to them and say we need 5 people, these sorts of hours per week, and the like. That is how it works.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Then I guess the final thing, so we anticipate the helpline will evolve and change with the next set of regulation changes, which we all expect coming up in the next month, and you would imagine that

would be, again, as you have outlined, some would be off the role, some will separate depending on demand, so we expect that in the next 4 weeks ... I think the next change is coming up, is it not, in 4 weeks' time. So I guess the final question around the whole COVID thing - it is obviously our last opportunity to discuss it - it has transformed how everything is done in the last 2 years. When you step back and look at it, how has it evolved the way you deliver the service on behalf of the Island at C.L.S. from where we started 4 years ago and the changes you were making then, then the pandemic came along and changes happened again and now we are coming out the other side and people are now embracing a different style of working, a different way of communicating, what is your snapshot of how COVID has changed you and your staff in delivering what is required?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Obviously our services have ... well, the expectations of the public have changed. More of us are doing things online than we used to perhaps do before and we have tried to ensure that our services have reflected the changing requirements of Islanders. That is why we have a prioritised phone service because that is the best way of making sure that everybody can get access to our services without the need for physical contact. Not everybody feels confident in being able to perhaps have as much social contact as they would have done before. That is a fact of the pandemic, but at the same time many more people have got used to doing things online. So we are prioritising our phone service, we are having appointments for a lot of our services and obviously we put more and more activity online over the period. In terms of internally, we have many more colleagues working from home than before. Actually prior to the pandemic it was very difficult for people to work from home, the technology that we had did not work at home, you could not answer calls at home, you could not access our key system at home, whereas in actual fact now we typically have 70 to 100 people who are working at home at some point each day. So that has been quite a shift and it is not just in C.L.S., of course, it is across-Government and across the Island.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Do you imagine that number to change at all or are you accepting that this is the new way of working? That the world has changed a little bit and you could be more accommodating? In your opinion, as somebody who knows it more than anybody, is that the best way to deliver for the taxpayer an efficient service for all the areas that your department covers?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, and that ... it will change, it will fluctuate I am sure, ultimately it is down to individual circumstances if somebody wants to work in the office they will be able to work in the office but if somebody wants to work at home we will do our best to try and accommodate that. Somebody who works at home at the moment may now find that in the summer, the property they have, the flat they have, is impossible to work in and it might be better to work in the office. So lots of these things will

change but ultimately now we have much more flexibility and I think that is a good thing for the long run. It has taken a bit of ... here we are doing a hearing again on Teams, that would not have been possible prior to pandemic. Teams has helped significantly with our connectivity. I think if we did not have that working from home would be very difficult in terms of keeping people connected. So we are obviously trying to navigate and get the best for our teams. If we can get the best for our teams then they will give the best service to the public as possible.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

In a short answer, there will not be a time where you will suddenly turn around and there will be a directive: "Everybody now has to work in the building"?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

I do not think so, no.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Okay, Minister, let us move on to the response to the inflationary pressures that we are all very keenly aware of right now.

[15:15]

So on 29th March it was announced that 9,000 income support households and 1,800 pensioners would receive an additional £20 per month per person and that, I quote: "The number of income support claims has also fallen and actual numbers are well below the estimates provided in the 2022 Government Plan. These budgets can be redeployed to provide this temporary support without making any demands on the wider public purse." So could you please confirm the difference, the surplus, between the actual number and the monetary value of income support claims compared with the estimates provided in the Government Plan of 2022 to 2025, if that is possible?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, I will have a stab at that. So obviously, you know, we project how many people are going to be on income support, you go by the numbers last year or whatever, then very rapidly in January, February and March we got so many more people back into work through just ourselves or using different schemes that we provided. We have not had this confirmed but it seems that the wage out there is being paid more because even with more people working the income support has still dropped, the money the family needs because they are earning more of it instead of getting it in benefits. So then we project 2 point something million that would not be needed for the normal activity but we have budgeted for. We have been keeping an eye since the gas prices went up, my officers were saying we maybe need to do something, the gas worked all right because there are

not too many people on low income in the Andium Homes Trust, et cetera, had gas but we knew then when the inflation started going up we started having real discussions every Friday. We were having them at high level, which I now know ... we have to do a scheme, we have this money, give me the bones of a scheme and this was what it was. The other people that are on it will be people who get pension plus and ... sorry, you said that. There is just under 1,000 people on the community costs bonus and the cold weather bonus. So all these will be included. It is very simple, we are going to write to them, a single person will get £20, a pensioner couple £40, a family of 4 £80, it is just added on, they do not need to apply and they will get that. We are just debating whether it will be the beginning or the end, it just works better some ways but it will be once a month. So hopefully if they get a bill that will be fine. Then in October, because I put the regulations up last year twice, I put them up in July for October 2021 and October 2022 ... so as winter hits there will be other money going in so that should help with the heating as well. Legacy would say we are trying to get all benefits ... because minimum wage is now going to be going up on 1st January every year, industry asked for that. It would work great if the new Minister looked at starting income support 1st January. So you might get the scheme, the other scheme for October to December and then what monies are around and what the Minister wants to do, might put them up in January 2023 as well. This was me covering all the people on the lowest income and there is another group of politicians which they co-opted me on, sort of an inflationary group strategy, that are looking things above that. They might look at fuel, they might look at the things that have been asked for but that is ... I am on it but it is very early days. I am not sure where that is going.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Sure. If there is, say, any additional surplus after the funds have been allocated to the £20 a month uplift scheme, how could these additional surplus funds be used if there was any?

The Minister for Social Security:

We do not know. This is a projection and this is if everything stays the same. We have so many people in work and, as I say, most of them needing less support. Ian might have better idea but I do not think it would be major, this is a projection of what we thought we would spend and projected to the end of the year. We have been able to put it across like this. Ian might have a better idea of the ifs and whats and ...

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Before you go into that, Ian, could you also provide an update about the number of Islanders in receipt of income support as of today as well, if that is possible?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

I think the Minister might want to comment on that. When we put the Government Plan together of course that process starts for last year in the middle of 2021 and we are making forecasts ahead from the F.P.P. (Fiscal Policy Panel) forecast on inflation, growth and so on and we use that to forecast with economists the level of likely unemployment and in particular the level of those who might be on income support. Last June, of course, it was still quite uncertain whether we would have high or low unemployment by the end of the year, although things were getting better we were still in COVID. I think in June or July we had a bit of a peak of several thousand cases. So it was uncertain whether there would be the strong performance that we have seen with the actively seeking work numbers and even towards the end of the year we were uncertain. The forecast in the Government Plan was for a higher level of unemployment than we have seen. Obviously we are now much lower even ... and we are at a record low so that is exceptional and we hope that continues and stays low but, of course, we have other issues affecting the world at the moment. So we have yet to reforecast for the next few years in terms of the impact of the F.P.P. numbers and inflationary numbers on the level of unemployment and we will then use that to reforecast for the next Government Plan in particular. We monitor spend every month and at the moment obviously we have the capacity to financially support what the Minister has proposed. Minister, the number of income support households?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, it is households, is it not? Is it now around 5,000, which is quite low.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Just under 5,500 now which is probably the lowest we have had.

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, that is right, yes.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Just spit balling a little bit as we have finally got the new census data recently and the drop in the expectation of the actual number of people living on the Island, seemingly a large number of people have left the Island. I would imagine that could account for some of the drop as well where certain people who are working in our industries did leave during the pandemic and since.

The Minister for Social Security:

Ian might have more on who left because we encourage people to tell us, we encourage people to let us know they are not going to be using their social security number, we have to look at all that date in retrospect but also ... I totally forgot what I was going to say. No, forgotten. No, sorry, Ian,

did you not say in the first 3 quarters ... sorry the first quarter you have had higher new come ins to the Island for registration cards?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, we have had high levels of ... yes, obviously we track the number of registration cards issued and we have had high levels of registration cards in the first quarter of the last 5 years. The other thing I would say is obviously I am not a statistical expert and the census in the previous forecast ... but for Spend Local we had roughly 103,000 or 104,000 on the Island who had a Spend Local card back in October 2020. I am not saying that is a census but that was a pretty good indication of who might have been here at the time.

The Minister for Social Security:

Do you want to add anything, Sue?

Associate Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

In terms of the census you talked about more people leaving, I think the disparity between the number that people thought it was going to be, perhaps around 107,000, 108,000 and the number actually was 103,000 or whatever, it has 2 aspects to it. One is that when they are doing those population estimates which you have had each year up until the census year, they have had to make assumptions about that in the same way they make assumptions about the budget for each year. So one of their assumptions had been actually that the number of people coming to Jersey was higher than it was. So the bigger change, the bigger difference between what they were expecting and what happened was the fact that the modelling was not quite right. The modelling had overestimated in particular the number of Polish people coming to Jersey. There was also some people leaving and they might have been ... because the census was in March 2021 when there was still significant COVID restrictions around that is likely to have had an impact. So the number is lower because of COVID but the numbers is also more lower, if you like, due to the modelling being based on perfectly good assumptions at the time which you could not check. But, as Ian said, when we did the Spend Local and we did a similar project gathering data from different sources and trying to get the best possible known addresses for everybody, we got to about the same number that we see now. It is interesting how the census pans out. In terms of income support, you are talking about people with 5 years' residence so those short-term differences in the migrant population probably have not got much impact on income support. I think for the reduction in income ... you also have to remember that the fact that the number is lower than we thought it was going to be does not mean to say the number has dropped, it means to say the number has been lower all the way through. It has still been going up but at a slightly lower pace than we thought. So the income support reduction is a real reduction, it is a real improvement in the economy, it is a real impact of people getting back to work. The higher minimum wage that the Minister brought in in

January and the general improvement in the economy, those are real factors, real drivers of improved performance and improved stability for local families.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Excellent, Sue, thank you for that. It is helpful as always and I know we have some questions around the census coming up but that was very helpful in terms of these numbers. Just going back to the inflationary points we were making. In a recent article on the *Bailiwick Express* it was reported there that the additional £20 a month is only available to households already in receipt of state benefits. Can you just confirm whether any work was undertaken to determine the cost of extending the scheme to low income working households not already in receipt but were very close to be coming on to, or on the radar or wanting to be on it, whatever scenario is suitable?

The Minister for Social Security:

So I think you are talking about a similar request scheme, I think that was totally justifiable because as soon as we stopped having flights in, et cetera, except for the Southampton emergency or returning people I know we had quite a few people on Island between 3 months' residency and 4 years. I went to C.o.M. (Council of Ministers) and said we were going to have to do something, it is not going to be income support but we have to get a scheme. They said, yes, so we did C.R.E.S.S. (COVID-19 Related Emergency Support Scheme) and that worked from the start of lockdown to August, it helped quite a few people. I think it was 300,000 something we paid out. I am just remembering but I could be remembering a wrong number. But we are interested ... and we need to find this out, if we find people at foodbanks are under 5 years and they are struggling then we are wanting to try and help but with a different pottle, a different scheme. We do not know what it is yet but until we identify the people we do not know. Again, it has always been this 5 years, it may need to be tested but, again, you have to make sure that you have the money. If you start paying out more people it is going to be a lot more money, et cetera. For 5 years you cannot get money and then it is another 5 years before you can get into qualified housing, so it is 2 different issues for the same set of people, yes.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Sue, did you want to come in there? I saw you just pop up.

Associate Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

You asked a question about whether the Minister should have extended the scheme to other people. One of the aspects of the Minister's scheme is it has happened quickly. She talked about having meetings over the winter months and seeing what was happening and tracking it very carefully. The war in Ukraine really was a tipping point and what was a bit of a problem became a very big problem quite fast. The use of existing benefit claimants, you have good information about those people

already, you have them on your computer system, you know their bank account details, you know they are in Jersey. They do not have to apply for the scheme, the scheme will automatically go out, if everything goes to plan the first payment will be going out before the end of April. That is a very quick nimble scheme coming off the ground fast. If you wanted to expand it to other people you do not know household composition, you do not know how to identify people. So you would have to think really hard as to what to do.

[15:30]

You either have a Spend Local scheme where you give everybody in Jersey - and you know you are giving money to millionaires and to people who do not need the money and so on - or you have to have an application process and eligibility criteria, people have to apply for it. It will be much, much more complicated to run. So you have to decide ... Ministers will decide obviously between a quick scheme which is easy to set up and very well targeted to people you already know about, and a broader scheme which may or may not work and will take time to set up and, therefore, will not address immediate need. That is where the Minister is at the minute. As she says, there is a broader political group looking at wider issues and that might be the way to address it, rather than giving money to people it might be that something else is done which supports some of the cost which is borne by many people. That is something that will be worked out. It will not come out before the election because of the very limited time now but officers will be working over the election period so the new Ministers will have options on the table for them when they arrive.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Would a quick win be just contacting all the charities and the food bank providers run by the Salvation Army to see their database, to see the people claiming to quantify against the numbers you have to see: "Oh, yes we have those people here" or: "We do not have those people." Would that not be a quick fix to work with those groups who you would hope and presume have some data.

Associate Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

We do work very closely with food banks but food banks are run in a very different way to Government. They are not looking at databases and lists of people and eligibility; they look at people who come into their organisation from day to day and they give people support when people ask for it. So we are working really well with foodbanks at the minute to create something like a database because it would be really helpful to everybody to have that information. It does not exist at the minute so that is very much on our minds at the minute to try and improve the way in which food banks know about clients from different organisations and how Government can help people. In reality the number of people using food banks is very small compared to the number of people on

benefits and, as I say, the food banks do not hold good data about people. I am not sure they even collect contact details, quite honestly. That would be quite a difficult project.¹

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

But I think a worthwhile one to know. That is really interesting, thank you. Sue, you might want to answer this as well; could you advise whether the inflation strategy group discuss the provision of temporary financial assistance to low income working households as we are discussing?

Associate Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

So the political group has met recently, I think it is due to meet again, but I am not sure what is on the next agenda.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Do you know when we might find that out, Minister, when the next announcement might be made? I know there is obviously an election but I am sure things could roll through as we are finding out.

The Minister for Social Security:

I think that is what Sue has just said. It will not be ready. This one, because we have been working on it since the gas went up, say October/November, then Ian told us we had money, we know all our people, we can deliver. The other group, the Chair of the Consumer Council, wants to hand some money and then some free buses. I mean, these are all different Ministers, are they not, and obviously I cannot see that happening before the election.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Another thing obviously during the last sitting was when Senator Moore announced the withdrawal of her proposition which was P.39 Community Cost Bonus Increase because she was reassured that sufficient work will be done between now and the next Assembly being put in place for our new Council of Ministers to bring forward an appropriately targeted proposition. So the next Assembly will be able to put in place some measures that will assist with the cost of living over the coming winter. Can you outline at this stage what measures are being considered that we have not touched upon to mitigate the cost of living increases that we are seeing at the moment?

¹ The Panel received clarification on the 22nd of April 2022, that the reference made to food bank data collection may have mistakenly implied that food banks shared information about clients with the Government of Jersey. The Government clarified that data about clients of food banks was not recorded – and plans to obtain data about food bank usage would only use anonymised, non-identifiable data. The Government further clarified that where a household required Social Security benefits assistance, the voluntary sector has in place an established procedure to seek written permission to pass an individual's contact details to Customer and Local Services, and that this data is never shared outside this established procedure.

The Minister for Social Security:

Well, as I say, at the meeting ... I was not due to be in that meeting, they co-opted me on at the last minute. From memory it has met once and it is going to meet again. They are not not considering things like that, how can we help. Then if we make fuel cheaper are we doing away with our environment targets, et cetera. So there are things being looked at but, as I say, there is just not time. Officers will be doing all the research, we will be able to steer them before, we will be able to steer: "Look at this and that" so while we are out campaigning officers will be putting things together and suggestions, et cetera. The community cost bonus was probably not the right thing to target because it can never be paid out until October anyway. By then there will be a new C.o.M., there will be discussions of a bigger nature on inflation in Jersey, et cetera, and I was grateful the Senator then understood that. There has been commitments, absolutely, we are going to do ... but it will be for the next C.o.M. to then say: "We do not like that" or: "We think that is fantastic." You have got to get the next C.o.M. in and then the next C.o.M. working together. It might be one of you; you might be a Minister.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I am glad that you mention that because obviously when you look at the diary, May, June, July, August, realistically a proposition if it is to be debated will not come to the Assembly until September because you get the election, you do all the nominations for all the roles and then there is a summer holiday break. So the first proper States sitting is September, that is 4 months before anything meaningful can come in, and all the time the cost of living goes up. We do not know what is going to happen with Ukraine over the summer and the fuel crisis rising, so this could get very tense, very quickly. But you are saying you are confident that the work will continue but something has to happen appropriately but it has to happen urgently; that is kind of where you are handing it over to us?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, absolutely, and that is why, as you say, for the new Minister for Social Security, my officers and myself discussed last year - it has not been done before - that as we have moved the elections back so far it would have even been tight to put the benefits up because they are regulations, they have to come to the Assembly. It is not just: "They go up by this" it is all different ways. Three times I have put the first child up £5 and then put disregards up. So you have got a pot of money but it is how you distribute and cut that cake. It is not an easy decision. I have been there so I know but a new Minister would have needed a bit of time. So for a safety net we put the 2 sets October 2021 and October 2022 and that is sort of a bit of work taken off the plate of the new Minister, if you like. They can add to it, but they can add to it say in January and change the payment times in January when everything would be ideal to go up like benefits, minimum wage, that is what the industry

wants, so it much more works not on the U.K. systems of April and October but it works on the Jersey System, January to December, and that is our tax year as well.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

We will wait and see. My final question before I hand over to Deputy Alves is around the H.I.F. (Health Insurance Fund). At the last quarterly hearing you advised that it is related to the actuarial review of the H.I.F. As we go into quarter 2 and quarter 3 of this year, they will have the administrative data to update projections. Obviously we have been hearing a lot about projections on all sorts of things. But could you provide an update on the status of the actuarial report and can you say today what date the review will commence and when it will hopefully be published?

The Minister for Social Security:

For the exact dates I have got Mark on line who is leading on this. They are all going together. All the funds will have an actuarial review and he will tell you the date. But I do not think the figures will be back until late 2022 to early 2023. But, Mark, have you got any more on that?

Senior Policy Officer, Government of Jersey:

Hi, yes, I am Mark and I work for SP3 and the Government of Jersey as a senior policy officer. You are right, Minister, I think we discussed this briefly at the last hearing as well where we confirmed that all the actuarial reviews would be available early next year after the work has been carried out. I think we also pointed out at the time that there are discussions around the population projections which are a key piece of information that goes into the actuarial reviews, and that we need to work on those with Statistics Jersey and the actuaries following all the outputs from the census to make sure that the actuarial reviews can be completed with the best possible data and looking forwards as to what the population could be. So in terms of the administrative data that would be available in quarter 2 this year, so in the coming weeks, but we do need to work through the other information that needs to be provided including the population projections.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Specifically, Mark, about the H.I.F. particularly, that is getting a lot of attention once again because of the election coming up and the funding for the care model which will become an election issue. As we have delved into many times on these hearings, when will we be able to see what the H.I.F. has been used for in black and white and the impact of the triage funding that is going on? When will that be available do you think?

Senior Policy Officer, Government of Jersey:

In terms of the Health Insurance Fund, the Government Plan included projections for the next few years on the fund balances on the basis of the Jersey Care Model and digitisation projects. So that

will show the fund balance and the expected money coming in and out over the next few years. The actuarial reviews will do more of a longer term projection going forwards many decades and, as I said before, that review and the other reviews will be all ready for early next year. They all use similar population projections but obviously each of the different reviews will have their own assumptions about the way the money is spent and the income that comes in, et cetera. So that will be unique to each of the actuarial reviews for the funds. The Health Insurance Fund review will take into account the planned States agreed expenditure for the Jersey Care Model project as agreed in the Government Plan. Finally, there is also the commitment already with the review of sustainable funding of health care and the fact that the Health Insurance Fund will be part of that review as well over the course of the next year.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Thank you, Mark. Minister, you will be sad, pleased - delete where applicable - to hear after 4 years that is it from me questioning you and I will hand over to Deputy Alves.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

I am going to be addressing some of the access to G.P.s (general practitioners) and primary health care. Minister, during a sitting of the States Assembly on 15th December 2021 Deputy Southern set out his proposition to make £10 million available to cover the cost of extending the health access scheme to all Islanders and noted that there are some 22,000 in relative low income. In response, Minister, you advised that: "There are about 22,000 people that might need extra help, I am not denying that. We are going to do this review and we should do this review and we should target it correctly." Please can you advise what work, if any, has since been done to assess the impact of primary health care costs on low income Islanders?

The Minister for Social Security:

Sorry, someone just walked in, could you just repeat that last bit for me again?

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Sure. Could you advise what work, if any, has since been done to assess the impact of primary health care costs on low income Islanders?

The Minister for Social Security:

I think this is the bigger piece of work. Originally Deputy Southern's proposition was more directed to the Minister for Health and Social Services, then COVID hit and we realised that the work just was not being done. So at the end when we knew we wanted to get something in I took over this, but when Deputy Southern brought that proposition there was already a commitment from the Minister for Health and Social Services. I think it is more 2 things; it is about, yes, looking at the

next lot of people, vulnerable with a sickness, et cetera, and would be also income I would imagine. We can identify those people, I do not know that would be too hard but then we have to identify how you open up and get the money to pay for it. Deputy Southern's scheme set a funding scheme as well.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Sue, did you want to come in then?

[15:45]

Associate Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

Just to expand on the point about access to primary care or access to health services in general. As the Minister said, this work started with the Minister for Health. The Minister for Health has a very firm commitment in the 2022 Government Plan to undertake a full review of health services as a whole - that includes primary care services - to identify the costs of those things but also, as I said, including more access, if you like, so access is a separate point. So that work is ongoing but that work is running underneath the Minister for Health and Social Services within the Health Department. So this Minister's scheme was, as she said ... we created a scheme as a temporary measure, if you like, to keep us going while the bigger scheme was put forward. That bigger scheme will take into account the ideas that you are talking about, the kind of broader population issues. As I mentioned before, identifying people who are not on benefits creates a whole new level of interaction with the Government, so these people are not interacting with the Government now, we do not necessarily know their household situation. We might know their earnings from their contribution data but we do not know their household income. There are many, many technical issues to be thinking about but, like I say, the big piece of work at the minute is running through under the Minister for Health and Social Services, the Health Department. Mark and I are working closely with Health colleagues on that piece of work, so they know about the actuarial review. But at the end of the day the Health Insurance Fund has the budget of, let us say, £30 million. The Health Department has a budget of £230 million. We are a small part of the whole picture, so you need to make the whole health budget sustainable and within that you need sustainable primary care and within that you need sustainable access to primary care. Those things are being dealt with now through a different department and Minister.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Thank you for that. Minister, on 29th March 2022 you announced that period products would be made freely available to all learners in schools in Jersey from September. In response to a question about the cost you advised that you were: "Going out to tender as we speak so I cannot give a figure." Please can you advise whether a figure for the cost of the scheme has now been finalised?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well, I would not know because the history of this, Deputy, is I took this on not as Minister for Social Security but with my hat as Diversity and Inclusion in response to a petition to do the Scottish scheme. I obviously put the reply in after it reached 1,000 signatures. At the same time I had Deputy Maçon and Deputy Wickenden as my Assistant Ministers and we sort of started to talk about how could we break this down. Then Deputy Maçon went to be Minister for Education and Children, so still working with me but offices across and in there. So then when it was Deputy Wickenden straight on board he said: "We have got to get the schools done, this has got to happen, we have got surveys from other places." We did a survey. There are many different reasons but it has literally been handed over to C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills). I will have nothing more to do with this scheme. I think the Minister who has next time got an extra hat of Diversity and Inclusion does need to look at the Scottish scheme and how far we want to go in Jersey to make it completely across the board. Again, a bigger piece of work, lots more people, massive budget. I think I was quoted £24 million in Scotland from Deputy Morel, I think he had looked it up in that debate. Again, where will the money come from? It can be done in Scotland so I cannot tell you and it is still literally just going out. It has gone out to tender or it is going out but somebody needs to ask the Minister for Education. It is completely under C.Y.P.E.S. now.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

So the financial information lies with the Minister for Education?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, and he has got the budget. He found some money and said he could do it so that is why it is ... and it works. I mean, I would not be putting period products into schools. It has got to be something that schools look after themselves with the Minister for Children and Education, so it has now completely passed to C.Y.P.E.S. and the Minister for Children and Education.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay, thank you. So in that same sitting in March you advised that work would be undertaken to look at providing free period products to all Islanders that require them, but you mentioned there about it probably being a stream of work that the next Minister would probably be taking on. Are you able to confirm whether any of this work has commenced, anything has been looked into yet?

The Minister for Social Security:

No, because, as I say, when it came to us and I had Deputy Maçon and Deputy Wickenden, I said we should start where we think we can start. We had a new officer, I think she was from the U.K., she knew a bit about this and she said: "Well you are already getting charities going into schools, I

think across the majority of U.K. education services they are free.” So I said: “Well, let us start there, but bite off what you can chew and what you can do” otherwise I do not think we would have got anywhere. But it is for the next person with the Diversity and Inclusion hat. I am doing now a sort of a ... it will be a handover but it will more be a private document because we did not want it to be sort of electioneering or anything like that, but it will be handed over to the new person who gets the job.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Thank you and moving on. Following the launch of the diffuse mesothelioma payment scheme in 2019, please can you advise the total value of claims made from that scheme?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, I just had it here, the total value. The total value of the money is £169,918 paid out. Completed application: 28; confirmed diagnosis: 17. Of 13 confirmed diagnoses 7 were made to patients and 6 by relatives.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Are you able to provide an update on the status of the funding for that scheme? How much funding from the original amount allocated remains available and how long will any surplus funding be kept available for use under that scheme?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well the scheme is in, it is definitely there, the funding has slightly gone down because obviously it is one of those ... it is a historic illness and the first came ... hopefully with new employment practices, et cetera ... but the money is guaranteed to be there if it is one case, 6 cases, until it goes away. I think I have said that right. We have no intention of not doing the scheme.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

The budget is there on a permanent reoccurring basis, although as we discussed in the Government Plan Scrutiny Hearing we did reduce the budget down to the current level of expenditure per year. The Minister has described there £169,000, a lot of that was when the scheme was launched but now each year it is a lot less than that so we have reduced the budget down as discussed and agreed in the Government Plan. But going forward that is base budget, and if we get a flurry of claims they will be paid even though the budget is not there so there are no concerns there.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

That is great, thank you. Moving on to financial well-being in old age. The panel notes the report on financial independence in later life was published by D3P Consulting, the Government's

independent pension experts, on 5th April 2022. What key outcomes or areas of the D3P Report are being considered for future pension reform in Jersey?

The Minister for Social Security:

Just before the report was published myself, Deputy Maçon and Mark, who will talk a bit more on what we are doing, have met again with D3P, their research, and this is now to take it a step forward. Again we cannot do anything in the end of the last Assembly and we had COVID. It was always going to be tight to do it in 4 years and consult, and there will be people who want different things, but we are getting the bones. This will all be handed over to the new Minister; the work is not in vain. I think we have got a couple more meetings but we will not be publishing anything, again no electioneering. But, Mark, have I missed anything? I am very happy with it and I think we need to really push on with this.

Senior Policy Officer, Government of Jersey:

Yes, so the report was published recently. It followed quite a bit of work towards the end of 2019 on-Island discussing with various different groups of people, both within Government and outside of Government, people that work in the pensions industry as well and obviously work with employers and individuals who want to save for their retirement. It also follows consultations in previous years around the Social Security Fund and also people's experience of saving for retirement, which is what led into the work because I think there were some potential issues about the numbers of people that felt that they had a good income in retirement or would have a good income in retirement. That is really what sparked this work off. The report summarises the findings of their discussions with people locally, outcomes from that consultation and also their international research and developments globally. Many Governments around the world, both of developed countries and also developing countries, they are also looking at how to support people to save for their retirements. So that is a collection of all those things. In terms of next steps I think the idea was really to put some of that in the context of Jersey as well, identify where there could be some conversations for what could happen next, options or ideas. They were not really recommending any particular way forward necessarily, I think it was really just to enable a further conversation with Ministers and with the public about what can be done. If you can appreciate, they had done a lot of their work and had written a draft report early in 2020. Unfortunately COVID happened, the work was put on hold for the time being, and then more recently they updated their work for what has been going on in a number of other countries in the year or 2 since then, so that has been built into the report, and so we have been able to publish that as a good line the sand, a good foundation for subsequent conversations. In terms of next steps, they talk about various objectives that the Government might want to look at for saving for retirement, the sorts of people that you might want to try and include, what Ministers and the public might think is a good amount to save or a suitable amount to have in old age, and things like that. So basically the next stage is to go into a little bit more detail about

some of the key questions, key decisions that need to be made, and then obviously with the next Government and next Ministers to prioritise that work and next steps, whether that be consultation or public conversations about things or whatever. But really that is for the next Government now to do that.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

So basically there are not really any key outcomes or areas that are being investigated at the moment, it is just everything is being looked at and considered. So has any work been undertaken since the report was published earlier this year or has it kind of just been looked at and being left to the next Assembly?

Senior Policy Officer, Government of Jersey:

There are several themes and key questions and decision areas that need to be discussed and made and so D3P have provided an introduction to those areas to the Minister and the Assistant Minister so that they have an opportunity to consider those areas and then they are able to provide that information as part of the handover to the next Government. For example, we are looking at how the savings side of things will work, how it could work in Jersey, different options there, as well as the kind of payment side when people get to pension age or later life, the money they get back and how that might work. The other things we are looking at as well is how any kind of saving might be delivered in Jersey. Government could have a greater or lesser role or the private sector could have a greater or lesser role. So it is just looking at the pros and cons, what happens elsewhere, so that we can kind of build-up that understanding, start to understand some of the possible issues, and then we can hand that as part of a briefing to the next Government. So there is a little bit more work going on but recognising there needs to be that handover while still trying to make some good progress if we can in the final time we have got with the current Ministers.

[16:00]

Deputy C.S. Alves:

So is there a schedule for the work to take place following the publication of this report or is it a case of doing the handover and then kind of leaving the timescale and the scheduling of work up to the next Assembly?

Senior Policy Officer, Government of Jersey:

Yes, I think there is an element of that. I think there will be some kind of research that can be done, not research but establishing the questions that need to be answered and a possible plan, but really it is whatever I can agree best with the current Minister - and I will leave it to her to speak in a moment - and then how that hands over too. But I will leave it now to the Minister, thank you.

The Minister for Social Security:

Obviously if we were not so far behind, we were near, we might have even had a chance to go out to a really good consultation, but it is how much work do you do. There will probably be a completely new C.o.M., Minister for Social Security, so how much work do me and Jeremy do up to like April, May, and make recommendations where people are not going to do that. But we are more teasing from here to here and it is good but I would not go as far as to say I am going to make total recommendations, because I do not want to go down one place ... people will want to make their own decisions on it or ask D3P as well because I am sure it will be them, they were absolutely excellent. The guy from New Zealand ... there is not a country that they have not explored, who has done it good, who has done it bad. Some of the countries you would not even think they would have a private pension scheme; it is really, really interesting the report as well. That is about as far as we can go politically.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Thank you, Minister. My final section is about Back to Work and candidate trainee wages. The panel has received questions from constituents that are concerned that employers are taking on trainee or apprenticeship candidates on levels of remuneration that are below minimum wage for extended periods of time. What processes are in place to ensure that Back to Work candidates are appropriately compensated by employers that offer trainee and apprenticeship roles?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well I think for a trainee there can be but last time I asked it was not even more than one hand, but the schemes being advertised lately ... a 90 per cent take-up and 75 per cent have stayed and now the company are paying them. We do have enforcement on minimum wage; it must be paid if that is the job. But Sue or Ian might want to add to how we do check that.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Maybe I will start. So there is 2 different things, one is the schemes that we have been using to support unemployed people who are actively seeking work through Back to Work. We have offered businesses there a minimum wage, that we would cover the costs of minimum wage for 6 months. We obviously pay that in arrears based upon what people have been paid, so we are going to be paying what the person is earning. They can pay them more than minimum wage but we will support them financially with that amount. There is of course within the employment legislation and minimum wage legislation the ability to have a trainee wage and that does not necessarily have to be somebody who is out of work who gets that job, it could be somebody who wants to learn an apprenticeship or study at Highlands. There are significant conditions around being able to use that wage that does include an approved training programme. Indeed there are year one and year 2

numbers, so the amount goes up in the second year as the minimum, so if there are examples that the panel have of people who believe they are not receiving the right level of wages in terms of the trainee wage then please do pass that on and the department will investigate because that is not appropriate. Trackers, who operate the apprenticeship scheme, know very much about how these rules operate so they would be advising their candidates, but you still can be on a trainee wage but being outside of Trackers as well. So if you do have examples please pass them on.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

My next question was going to be do you keep track of the amount paid to trainees and apprentices and the duration that trainees and apprentices are paid these amounts for? Is there any kind of monitoring basically of how many employers offer these wages and these roles?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

No, not in the sense that we would automatically be able to detect somebody who had not gone up from year one to year 2. The information that we have is around their contributory data and of course that can fluctuate depending on how many hours they have worked, never mind the hourly rate. But if we have an example then we will investigate and we will see if we can ... I cannot remember a case where we have seen this before in my time in the department, so if there is something it is quite unusual and we will investigate it quickly.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

My final question on that is what steps can be taken if somebody in a trainee apprenticeship role is not being offered sufficient opportunities for advancement by the employer, if any?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

In that sense, in terms of career advancement or development advancement, that is outside of the minimum wage legislation, which I think was your question there, Deputy. The individual obviously has a right to go and find another job if they are not happy with their opportunity to advance in any company. Sometimes easier said than done but that is their choice. If they are being paid less than the trainee wage or their training commitments are not being delivered then they should raise that with their employer and if need be they could obviously seek the advice of J.A.C.S. (Jersey Advisory and Conciliatory Service).

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Thank you. I am going to now hand over to Senator Mézec. Thank you very much.

Senator S. Y. Mézec:

Just some questions on the minimum earnings threshold, which was raised by this panel previously. You will recall the work that went on to get this set at the right level to try to make sure that we had confidence that nobody ended up worse off as a result of this. This was meant to have come into force at the beginning of this year; can you just give us an update on how that has gone and if that is all in place now, working well?

The Minister for Social Security:

We put the threshold instead of hours into money because of working with tax and the machines, but that is £101. I think it has gone okay. I have got nothing here to say but officers might know different. They did know more than what we thought but we tried to advertise it, and then if you remember we also brought an amendment so any change in line with the minimum wage on 1st January, the minimum earning level would go up. But Sue might know more because that will probably be in the department or dealing directly in the employer.

Associate Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

Really just to confirm what the Minister said, that everything is in place and it is obviously working as anticipated. As the Minister just said, the rate will go up automatically each year so there is no need for any further States decisions. It does not matter what the next Minister thinks about it, it is now embedded in regulations. So, absolutely, it has not caused any problems. I think we have had one query from one person which was easily resolved, so it has gone very smoothly thank you, yes.

Senator S.Y. Mézec:

My next question on this was going to be about whether you had had stakeholder feedback about this. So dare I ask what that one query was and how it was resolved?

Associate Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

It was a lady that had a nanny and she just needed to know what to do. That was it.

Senator S.Y. Mézec:

Okay, well that is good to know. Any other feedback of any sort, including on the level that it is set at? Have you had any feedback on that with people being content or otherwise?

Associate Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

I will defer to Mark if he has got any more information but as far as I am aware we have not had any real issues. We believe the rate is a fair rate and it has been set well and has been implemented smoothly and without any particular fuss. Mark, do you have any more to add to that?

Senior Policy Officer, Government of Jersey:

No, I do not, only that we had some feedback previously in advance from the employer perspective anyway, that they preferred and valued being able to operate with a monetary value rather than an hourly value. But that is not new news so I cannot add anything other than what Sue and the Minister have just added, thank you.

Senator S.Y. Mézec:

That is all on that unless any other panel member wants to interrupt and ask something that I have not. But if not, moving on to the disability and inclusion end of year report which came out on 17th March, and obviously there was the Embrace Our Difference campaign as part of this as well. In section 5.2 of that report it relates to the development of a communication plan and it said that in this year we will be linking our team with our partners and strategy working groups to link members of the public who have disabilities with the team. Can you just provide an update on how that is going and if you are managing to link up with those members of the community as part of this?

The Minister for Social Security:

I will start and then bring Paul in. There is a new group that I am on with Deputy Ahier and members of the community, and it is all about disabilities. It is bringing things together on where we are. But Paul will probably have direct answers to point 5.2 or whatever page it was, thank you.

Director of Local Services:

Yes, in terms of user voice that is imperative to how we shape services, so we have partnered with Enable Jersey, an excellent organisation here on the Island, they will be leading that work so it has got that independence. That work I understand has started. We think it is very important that is done with a third party civil society organisation and again that then feeds in. So if you look at page 6 of the report - I do not know if you have got it in front of you, Senator - it gives an overview of the structure. So we have the advisory board which the Minister chairs, we have also got members of Commerce, Visit Jersey, membership from the media, the legal, and again trying to help shape services for Islanders. We have then got the leadership group which are the heads of the 5 working groups, and the idea is that the priorities that have been agreed will then be fed in by the user groups, so we have got that constant dialogue with users of services and importantly carers as well. That is something which we have started and we are taking forward.

Senator S.Y. Mézec:

Thank you, and is there any view at this point about how that work will be picked up by the next Minister after the election and how whoever ends up holding that title can pick this up quickly and get up to speed with it?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well politically obviously, Senator, I am totally behind this. It was Senator Routier who wrote the first disability strategy. We had one lovely lady doing bits at the side of her desk with other jobs, and with the budget we have got ... we have got some fantastic officers, we have got people across all areas. So I cannot praise it enough. So whoever goes forward I would be backing ... the budget has got to stay, I think we already have done that but Paul or Sue might tell me ... it is one of those things, now it is started it cannot stop basically, it has just got to go onwards and upwards.

Director of Local Services:

Yes, I would agree. If you look at the report it gives an overview of the structure. I think we are very honest about the challenges that we face, Senator. We then give an update about what we have done this year in terms of the strategy but also in addition, and then lay out very clearly what we are doing. So we are working with parishes to ensure that people can vote, making sure that it is accessible, a big focus of transition of young people into adulthood, and they are some of the key priorities. So it is ongoing but we have got challenges and just to sort of evidence that, if I may, we do lots of work with Beresford Street Kitchen which I know is where you host your drop-in sessions, and they recently showcased --

Senator S.Y. Mézec:

I have been there 2 times.

Director of Local Services:

Yes, that is because we do lots of work with B.S.K. (Beresford Street Kitchen) and they recently showcased their amazing work that they do at the British and Irish Council, and other jurisdictions were really quite blown away which I think is a real feather in the cap of Jersey. But there are still challenges and one of the challenges that the C.E.O. (chief executive officer) told Ian and myself, and the conference, was that one of the crew members who had been working there for 4 years - skilled, reliable, excellent employee - had applied for a number of jobs in the hospitality sector and did not get one interview. So she changed her C.V. (curriculum vitae) from working at Beresford Street Kitchen to working at a café in St. Helier and immediately got interviews. I think that kind of shows, yes, we have got a 27 page report but actually that is what really needs to change, that attitude and that willingness to embrace our difference and really look at those changes. We have got work to do but collectively we will do it.

[16:15]

Senator S.Y. Mézec:

Absolutely, and hopefully we are well on that pathway to change there. On section 5.15 of the end of year report which relates to the inclusive justice and citizenship pilot project, it says: "The research

part of the project has progressed well with a scoping report on the barriers to inclusion due in February 2022 in multiple formats.” Can you provide an update on the status of that report?

Director of Local Services:

Yes, I think we are still waiting for that to be concluded so that is something that we will have to take forward. I think some of the research which we have highlighted in the paper around attitudes, et cetera, shows some of those issues. I think we talk about some of the barriers, whether they be physical or attitudinal, but again we need to use the evidence of the almost 800 people who contributed and turn that into action.

Senator S.Y. Mézec:

What sort of outcomes are you hoping for from the scoping report?

Director of Local Services:

I think it has given us that evidence base to go and challenge. If you look at the work that we did there was significant concerns around access to retail, employment which I have just touched upon, there is a range of barriers. So the advisory panel, which we touched upon, is a mix of people who are in a position to make changes and to influence. Really what we want to do with that panel is to help us drive this forward because it is not just Government here; this is the whole of society and that is why the advisory panel is not really top heavy on civil servants like me, it is really people from right across the community who can influence change.

Senator S.Y. Mézec:

Thank you. Moving on to the last subject area from me which is about the benefits and payments system replacement. The transform programme which is scheduled to take place this year we understand refers to the replacement of the I.T. (information technology) system, N.E.S.S.I.E. (New Employment Social Security Information Exchange) which is currently used to administer social security benefits and payments. Can you provide an update on that work?

The Minister for Social Security:

The steering group, which I am on as Minister, just sort of started. It is very technical. I thought N.E.S.S.I.E. had a little bit less life than it had and it is going into tax, but Ian can explain it really technically and really well. I will put you in there, Ian.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

No problems at all, Minister. To answer the Senator’s question, the transform programme is a multi-year programme so it is not something that is going to be delivered in 2022, and you can see in the Government Plan most of the expenditure is in the next few years rather than this year. Underneath

all this we are trying to obviously be proactive and replace a legacy I.T. system. The I.T. system that we have was built in a very particular way and we would like to be able to build something and develop something that is not about just processing but is designed around our customers and their life experiences. So that is what we are trying to do and we are currently developing our requirements before we go out and test the market and see what might be out there that can deliver those requirements. In putting our requirements we are of course engaging with colleagues in Government but also with users and customers. That is what we will be doing. This will be an ongoing process for the next few years and we are working very closely with colleagues in M. and D. (Modernisation and Digital). The funding is about £23 million hopefully at the very maximum, but hopefully less than that, and that is coming from the Social Security Fund and is all outlined in the Government Plan. It has all been done in the open in that sense. The Minister is obviously an important stakeholder. We have a political oversight group that met for the first time last week and that includes also the Assistant Chief Minister who leads on digital projects.

Senator S.Y. Mézec:

You mentioned the budget there briefly, and the Government and I.T. budgets is often a very interesting area so dare I ask what you can say to us to give us confidence that this will not go over budget?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

I think I.T. projects in Governments around the world are obviously very difficult and we have seen it in Jersey. We are seeking best practice, where we can establish it, and making sure that we proceed in an appropriate way. It is difficult. We talked a bit about inflation earlier, if we have a period of inflation that is forecast by the F.P.P. then that budget that we have set has already effectively been reduced over the next 4 years in terms of the value it could have got. So we will be mindful of all those things but ultimately we want to deliver something that makes the experience for Islanders much easier to deal with Government, and in particularly in relation to the Minister's benefits. That is what we are aiming to do and we will endeavour to deliver it under budget and on time.

Senator S.Y. Mézec:

Thank you. I am sure the next iteration of this scrutiny panel will enjoy holding you to account on that.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

I am sure they will.

Senator S.Y. Mézec:

Just a very last question from me to the Minister is more broadly about that transform programme. At a previous quarterly hearing you spoke about the other cultural and structural changes that need to come about. Could you just elaborate a bit on that, on what sort of cultural changes you believe need to be made in C.L.S. as part of the transform programme?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well I think a lot of the changes at C.L.S. and the teams, you have got people dealing with working teams and people dealing with pension teams, it completely transformed, mainly because of COVID, how things are delivered. I do not know if I am answering the right question because I literally cannot remember what I said. Can you be more specific; what are you asking me about, Sam? Sorry, I do not want to jabber on for the last few minutes and get the answer completely wrong.

Senator S.Y. Mézec:

Sure. I do not have the full quote of what exactly you said last time but getting a department to work better together, get the best outcomes it possibly can for those who they seek to help, incorporate feedback and all the rest of it is extremely important for any public service department. Obviously the I.T. infrastructure has got to be part of that, but other ways of working, how you treat those who engage with the service is all part of that. So it is, I guess, a broad question so perhaps I could phrase it as what more do you think the department needs to do so that it can better serve the people in future and how will that sit alongside some of the more structural things like I.T. systems and the rest of it.

The Minister for Social Security:

We do have quite a few customer surveys and they can be done obviously on the phone if they are on the phone, literally listening to people and what is better. As I say, we have got to where we are probably because of COVID, people working from home, people booking appointments, et cetera, and I just think it needs to sort of carry on. I never want anybody to be disenfranchised who cannot use a computer. I know they are not because they phone up and then if that cannot be sorted people can go in, they can go into a private room and literally discuss something bad that has happened to them. But it is always ... this has happened quickly, we need to keep listening to the staff on the ground that are delivering it and just keep improving. I think it is a much, much better system. Some people would not agree but I just did not like all those people sitting there for a long time sometimes, being very upset, and then most people could hear what you were talking about. I sort of begged for that change with Deputy Southern for quite a few years. We got there by COVID so I am pleased that we have got there, but there is always room, I would imagine, for improvement. Ian might want to add some more because I have probably not covered everything that they do to make sure of customer satisfaction, but I know they do lots because I get reports back.

Senator S.Y. Mézec:

I think that is okay, Minister. I will hand over to the Chair and I will just say in my phrasing of that question I avoided using the word “customer” because I have got strong views about what that means for the culture of an organisation, but I suspect we will have more debates on that in the future. But I will hand over to the Chair.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Even I am not that good that I can ask the questions that I have got listed here within 5 minutes, and I am not sure whether you have an extra 5 or 10 minutes, Minister, to humour me because obviously this is our last hearing and so, therefore, I would prefer not to have to write a letter with the questions I have, if at all possible. So if we could continue?

The Minister for Social Security:

I am okay. I do not know about officers but I am sure ...

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

I will be as swift as I can because I think some of the areas have pretty much been covered anyway. It was just really in relation to what Senator Mézec has just been talking about as in the customer services and the open door policy. So you can confirm with me today that the provision of walk in appointments at C.L.S. will continue for the rest of 2022?

The Minister for Social Security:

They are not walk ins. You can walk in and you can give things. If you want an appointment to discuss something you phone up and an appointment is made. They have gone up from I think 20 a day to 30 a day, or that might be a week, Ian has probably got the top figures, but it is working better. There is nobody - and it is not even because of COVID - sitting in that building Monday morning when something has happened tragically over the weekend. It is never good. It should work and get better. You can have an appointment, if you cannot do I.T. the ladies or men go through the process and then if they at is no good you will be given an appointment. But the door is open if you want to drop off something or just ask questions about a registration card. There are people manning the desks that I suppose like the old welcome hosts would have been.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Yes, so you do have some facility where you can walk in and get a service; it is just those things where somebody wants to discuss something more of a personal nature where they have to make an appointment?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, and mostly income support claims, especially new ones, are normally brought about by a sudden change in circumstances, you could have lost a job or relationship breakdown or even more tragically that there has been a death in the family or something like that that.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

I am just going to move on to the quality of life survey results. The recent Better Life Index highlighted that Jersey dropped 5 places on the index to 24 out of 41 nations. Have you identified areas where the C.L.S. or your remit as Minister for Social Security could help to improve the quality of life for Islanders?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well I have not because I was away for 10 days and I came back literally and we got these questions. I think there has probably been more done by the officers but I could not answer that truthfully. I can answer it truthfully, that I do not know the answer.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, that is fine. What steps do you believe need to be taken in order to improve for the next Better Life index score for Jersey? Any ideas?

The Minister for Social Security:

What do you mean, setting the questions or ... Sue needs to answer this. I have really not even studied it; being away has been hectic and then I am not well but, yes, go on please, Sue.

Associate Director, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:

Thank you for the question. The Minister is right, she has not had time ... we have not had a meeting since the index has been published so she has not had time to look at it in any detail. The index is obviously a really good idea; it is an international project and it seeks to kind of compare statistics across different jurisdictions. That does pose some challenges for Jersey because being so much smaller than other places we do not collect all this information every year so it is important to understand that some of the figures for Jersey will not be the ones that were collected last year; they will relate to a few years before. But within that it is really important that you look at a range of measures; health is just as important as people's income. The Minister for Social Security's responsibility mainly applies to employment and unemployment and we score really well on that one. We talked about the unemployment rate being the lowest for a long, long time, and long-term unemployment also dropping. Then there is a more general one about income where we do not perhaps come out quite so well in the international comparison, but I think on the income figures these are based on very old figures and your panel I am sure is very interested in the next version of the income distribution survey, or I think it is called the living costs and household income survey.

[16:30]

That was again disrupted by COVID and I am afraid this is a recurring theme, so some data was collected in 2019 and that limited data will result in a very limited publication soon. But a proper survey is being undertaken now and that will give us really good information. That will not be ready until the next Council of Ministers, but that will give you the detailed information the next Minister for Social Security would use to kind of decide areas that he or she might want to concentrate on. I think that is the most we could really say. It is an interesting international comparison. You have to remember that Jersey could be exactly the same as it was the year before and other countries have got better we will go down the list, because it is in order, so it does depend on other people's performance as well as your own.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

That is great. Thank you for that. Civil service reforms, target operating model, Common Strategic Policy, Government Plan. Minister, the civil service has undergone significant reforms since 2018 with many changes introduced across Government departments through the new OneGov structure and the establishment of the Government Plan, the Common Strategic Policy and the target operating model. Please could you provide an overview of the changes that have taken place within C.L.S. as part of these reforms? Have the reforms presented additional challenges or unforeseen consequences for C.L.S.?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well I think this goes back to the target operating model. We were able to do that very, very quickly because of the nature of the business and we did that I think in the first year. I am the Minister for Social Security but I am not necessarily the Minister of C.L.S.; there is lots more that goes on down there, and I know at the beginning people were like: "Oh, all got to go down there" but now they are quite pleased that when they go down there or get that appointment ... Ian will elaborate. I think we are doing something extra with tax is the last one. It is just better for the customer. I am sure things can be improved but I think it has worked well for my department. You can see Deputy Young is bringing a proposition next week for much reinventing, going for more change very quickly after the next election. Personally I think that should happen after the next election if needed. Last debate of the last sitting to change massively things that have taken some departments a lot longer than mine to get into play and move it around again. That is just my political feeling, Deputy.

Deputy M.H. Le Hegarat:

So from that you think that Social Security has benefited from the changes brought within C.L.S.?

The Minister for Social Security:

Absolutely, and I think the public have benefited as well.

Deputy M.H. Le Hegarat:

Do you know how much those reforms have cost C.L.S. since 2018?

The Minister for Social Security:

Well I think they made savings but I would definitely have to bring Ian in for that because it is operational, he is in charge of all the target operating models, putting different people in different teams, and then obviously ... I do not know if COVID would have had an effect but, Ian, can you elaborate on that?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, certainly. So the target operating model changes we made across not just the Minister's areas of Social Security but also the library, the Office of the Superintendent Registrar, and the extra services we brought in, the crematorium, the nursery education fund and so on. When we restructured we actually made savings that contributed towards the Government's rebalancing ambition, which allowed more money to therefore be put into growth for other projects. So we made savings, so we are running at a lower cost than we would have been had we continued to operate essentially as we were before. But more importantly, if you look at the library we have supported our library team to expand to the hours, to move the branch library to a much better location out west. The crematorium service has been transformed. We are really pleased with how the teams have worked with users, the stakeholder group we set up there, and the Office of Superintendent Registrar has had to handle through COVID but we will continue to handle all the registrations for the Island for I think 10 out of 12 parishes. So again that should in the long run provide a better service for the public by making things easier. That is our ambition; if we can make things easier for Islanders to do business with Government then that is better, it is better for colleagues who work in Government but it also means that we can free up our time to help those customers who need the most help. That is a really important part of what we are trying to do with transform by removing a lot of the manual processing that we still do, because our system is 20 years old, and be able to focus our time more on supporting the public, and that is a good ambition to have.

Deputy M.H. Le Hegarat:

So it is clearly your view that it has improved it for the public, but how have the reforms changed working relationships do you believe between C.L.S. and other governmental departments since 2018?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

We have been leading on the customer strategy and working with a cross section of people from across different departments to apply the same A.C.E. (accessibility, consistency, easiness) plus principles, trying to get people to think ahead for what service the customer might need next. So we have been working and we are making good progress; 3 years ago we did not have a complaints policy, 3 years ago we did not have much in the way of customer survey, only really in C.L.S. Now we have got thousands of bits of customer feedback which we have, we have got complaints and compliments coming in from customers in a much easier way. We are in a much better place during COVID than we were in the beginning of it, in those respects. So we work closely. We would not be able to transfer things from Health, from Home Affairs, from Education, and indeed we are now supporting colleagues in Revenue Jersey by doing some simple straightforward activity for them. When a customer has phoned up to register we can register them in the tax system as well as register somebody for Control of Housing and Work Law purposes, whereas previously they would have had to go and speak to somebody else and do something else, so we are making that easy. We are making good progress in that. It has been slower than what I would have liked, for obvious reasons due to COVID, but we are still in discussions about transferring other services across Government into C.L.S. where we can I believe take the feedback from those colleagues who might be transferring and help them make improvements to the service.

Deputy M.H. Le Hegarat:

How have the reforms impacted C.L.S. working relationships with the third and voluntary sector, do you think?

The Minister for Social Security:

We have got Paul McGinnety, we had someone else before who was very good but Jersey was not for him sadly, and then Paul was already doing something. But I think it has absolutely improved relations with the third sector. That is what Paul was talking about earlier, this steering group across the board, some third sectors, et cetera, but also people in the media and that. But I just think it has worked very well but, Ian, do you want to add? Or if Paul is on the line.

Director of Local Services:

Yes, I think, Minister, it is about having that mutual respect. We are so lucky to have 400 charitable organisations, a really strong civil society, an excellent parish system and I think it is how we work together. Funnily enough I was having to give evidence to the panel this morning about COVID and I pointed out that the strengths of Jersey really helped the community. So we have to have good relationships, we have to have parity, we have to have an open dialogue, and through our cluster groups that we have which focus on cancer, learning disabilities, homelessness, children and young people, vulnerable adults, we work in partnerships with organisations. The library, again we see this as a place where third sector organisations would come and use and we do on a regular basis.

You will be delighted to know that we have hit the first time we have had 1,000 people in the library since the start of the pandemic this week so we were over the moon with that. I think it is just about nurturing that relationship. If I am honest, when I first arrived it was maybe quite sort of top down, and like any relationship you have got to invest in it and you have got to be open and honest, and I think that is where we are. So there is still some work to do but I think we are in a better place in terms of being far more transparent. As Sue said before, we work with everybody from the food banks to Jersey Hospice, and again I think at the end of it we all want the same thing; we want the best thing for Islanders moving forward.

Deputy M.H. Le Hegarat:

Okay, and the final questions from me, Minister, following the 2022 general election how will continuity of C.L.S. services be maintained by the next Minister for Social Security over the next 4 year term, do you think?

The Minister for Social Security:

There is a big unknown who ... no secret, I am going to be standing. No secret, I do not know who is going to be in Council, I do not know who is going to get what job. As I say, there will be a handover legacy report; it is not going to be sort of public because we could have been accused of doing electioneering. I would just say carry on doing this, carry on improving all the time for the customers. As well we will be getting the new office building which there has been lots of consultation with my staff, C.L.S. staff, et cetera, who is in there. But that is such a big unknown, Deputy, who is going to be in and who is going to make the decisions. It could be an all new Council of Ministers but there is lots of work that was done before I came in and I took it forward. The family friendly, there was lots of foundation ... why would I not want to take that forward. I think the next Minister for Social Security ... well, if somebody stood up and went for the job of Minister for Social Security and said: "I am going to throw the baby out with the bath water, I am going to start from scratch" they would not get my vote.

Deputy M.H. Le Hegarat:

The final thing I was going to say was - and this is a question for you as well - obviously C.L.S. ... there is obviously a director general in charge of that in relation to Ian Burns, however, what has always been evident to us as a scrutiny panel is that there is no sort of Minister responsible for C.L.S. as an overall. Do you think somebody should take that mantle and have the responsibility for C.L.S. overall?

The Minister for Social Security:

I think that would be a massive job because we must not confuse policy with implementation and operation. As Ian has just said, they do the library, they do the crem, but the policies that are made

on changes, if it is the library law, tax law, is always made by the Ministers for Treasury and Resources, Education, et cetera, et cetera. I think that will stay because if it was one you would have to be a bit of an expert in everything and I do not think that would work. You make the policies and C.L.S., best place to carry them out across the board so the customer ... the customer does not see the difference. The customer does not want to know: "That is not my bit you cannot collect that here" but the Minister has already made that decision: "This is the policy I want and that is how it is going to be implemented" and it probably goes to the States if it is a big change, and then C.L.S. will on the ground do the operational stuff and implement.

Deputy M.H. Le Hegarat:

Okay, that is the final from me. What I would just like to say obviously because this is our final public hearing with yourself and your Assistant Minister and also the team, and I would just like to say from my perspective thank you very much for your participation over the last 4 years. I think we have had a good working relationship. I think we have, all of us, done our best to achieve what is best for the Island as a whole. So thank you to you, Minister, and to your Assistant Minister, Deputy Maçon. But I would also like to thank your team because, as I said, we have often overrun, we have often asked more questions and we have always had positive feedback.

[16:45]

It has been a real pleasure for me as an individual, but certainly as Chair of this panel; I think it has worked really well between ourselves and you as Minister for Social Security. So I would just like to say thank you to all of the team and obviously to my other panel members, the Vice Chair, Deputy Pamplin, Deputy Alves and also Senator Mézec, for all of their hard work as well and to the 2 officers that we have at the present, which is obviously Katherine and Ben. So thank you very much all for your time and effort.

The Minister for Social Security:

I would just like to add to that, Deputy. It has been a pleasure and I have always said we try not to spring any surprises and we try to give you as much as we can up front. Obviously sometimes timing was just too tight. But I think it helps because I have chaired reviews and been on different scrutiny panels; I was on the very first scrutiny panel which was Health, Education and Home Affairs. Imagine that one. We were covering all those. I do think that helps so you actually understand the 2 sides of the job. Thank you for the kind comments about my officers because they always try and ... if it is just a technical briefing and to me it is too technical, they understand it and they give you a technical briefing so you understand it, which has been brilliant, thank you.

Deputy M.H. Le Hegarat:

Thank you, and that is us done. It is 4.46 p.m. and that is us done, our last public hearing.

[16:46]