

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY M.R. HIGGINS OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 21st JANUARY 2014**

Question

Will the Minister advise members what assistance, if any, is available to carers and families of children who have medical conditions such as cystic fibrosis which do not always manifest themselves externally and which do not meet the normal criteria for financial assistance used by the Department?

Answer

Financial assistance is available to low-income families through the Income Support benefit, including three levels of the component for personal care needs. Income Support also has a separate amount for carers, known as the carer's component, and people who give up work to become a full-time carer may also qualify for a separate contributory benefit called Home Carer's Allowance.

The Income Support components are not tied to specific conditions, but are awarded on criteria that are based on the extent to which an illness or disability creates the need for assistance with personal care, mobility or additional GP visits. Each of these three areas attracts a separate element of the payments, and people can qualify for one or more of them. The need for care may be caused by physical, sensory or mental illnesses and disabilities. In the case of children under the age of 12 there are also eligibility criteria where a child will miss certain developmental milestones, or where they need supervision or assistance with medical care. As an example, this might include supervision with physiotherapy for a child, which I understand is more common for children with cystic fibrosis.

I am aware that the care needs of patients with cystic fibrosis are diverse, and that some people with the condition will manage independent living unassisted, whereas others will require a higher level of assistance with care and mobility. However, the assessment criteria are designed to cover all areas of everyday living where care assistance would be required, and I am confident that people who require specific assistance due to the effects of cystic fibrosis will satisfy the criteria for these elements of the Income Support benefit.

In 2014 I have requested that officers investigate options to further support families where children have very high personal care needs, but who would not qualify for Income Support due to household income.