

2020.01.21

8 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour of the Minister for Social Security regarding the implementation of changes to family friendly legislation: (OQ.11/2020)

Will the Minister provide an update on the timescale for implementation of changes to family friendly legislation and on current work in respect of maternity and paternity payments?

Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier (The Minister for Social Security):

I thank the Deputy. Family friendly employment legislation was adopted in the Assembly in October and, in November, the Government Plan voted to secure funding for the extension to parental benefits and detailed work on this project is now underway. Regulations to introduce the parental benefit are expected to be lodged before Easter and as soon as I have something that looks like a skeleton I will show it to Scrutiny as well. An Appointed Day Act for the Employment Law changes will be debated at the same time as the benefit regulations and I would like to see the laws implemented in July this year.

2.8.1 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I thank the Minister for her answer. I think it is fair to say that families on the Island are very excited about the new changes that are coming through but also I think there is some confusion. I am not sure about other Members but I have been getting a lot of communications from people asking me what exactly are the changes we have made. People are still unclear about what is in place at the moment. Would the Minister agree to put an outline perhaps on the Social Security page just making it absolutely clear what is in place now and what is coming and roughly when?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

I absolutely will because we pay 18 weeks and actually it is 26 weeks for both parents. This is what we are going to do, 32 weeks; it is going to be a parental benefit. It is about the care of the baby, it is not incapacity or anything like that. I will do that. The added, which is absolutely great news, is some companies are already adopting the new and it was already in the contract so we are behind but we will make it as clear as we can what is in place now because employers need to, it will be breastfeeding breaks, breastfeeding facilities will all be in the new regulations, which as I say, I want to start July this year but I will clarify exactly what is available now and get it on the best forum.

2.8.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

What attention, if any, has been given to the fact that those parents on income support have no disregard on claiming for parental leave?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Funny the Deputy should ask that. He might have bugged my Social Security meeting on Friday. This is one thing that Reform did bring up. There is no disregard. If it is a replacement earnings you get earnings disregarded so officers are now taking this into consideration. I do not want it to delay what is going on and apparently it will not. So if it is not introduced at the same time it is definitely being looked at, I can assure the Deputy. If it is a replacement of earnings I want the disregard looked at.

2.8.3 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I appreciate the Minister committing to clarifying that information on her website. Could she just let the Assembly know when that information will be put up on the website?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

I would need to ask the officers where it is at the moment. Obviously the social security/maternity benefits are all on the Social Security site, I often look it up. I looked up my pension leaving date the other day, worked it out very well. But I absolutely will find out for the Deputy. If it is not clear I will then let the Deputy and all the other States Members know. If it needs a press release, so be it, we will get a press release out because it is that transition. I do not want anybody not to know where they are but again if the companies out there feel that they can start doing it before, and are doing it, that is always great news.