

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 3rd JUNE 2014**

Question

Does the Minister consider that in transferring the funding of Invalid Carers Allowance (now renamed Home Carer Allowance) from general taxation to a contributory basis, it was appropriate to include contribution conditions which can prevent family members from claiming this benefit and becoming full-time carers for elderly disabled relatives, and, if so, why?

How does the Minister rationalise this change against moves to keep those in need of care in their own homes for as long as possible rather than in more expensive institutional care?

Answer

The Home Carer's Allowance offers compensation to working age people who give up employment to take on a caring responsibility. In this respect a contribution requirement is completely appropriate to ensure the benefit maintains this focus. The requirement for a contribution record was described in P.101/2012 and the proposition was approved by the Assembly 40 pour, 3 contre with 1 abstention. P.101/2012 described the contribution requirement thus;

This benefit is paid primarily to working age people who give up paid employment due to their caring responsibilities and it is reasonable to require that the individual should have previously paid contributions in order to receive this benefit. As with other contributory benefits, it is proposed that the carer has paid contributions for at least 6 months at some time in the past. The carer will also need to have contributions in the relevant quarter – i.e. 2 quarters before the start date of the claim. To ensure that parents of young children are able to satisfy this condition, the contributions in the relevant quarter can be either paid or credited, including Home Responsibility Protection credits which are available to a parent caring for a child under five.

There are wives who were married before April 2001, who continue to be able to elect not to pay contributions, and who will receive a pension based on their husband's contribution record. A married woman in this situation may not have a contribution record in her own right, but she will still be entitled to claim the new benefit.

In addition the benefit is available to people who have credits following unemployment due to redundancy or in respect of time spent in higher or further education.

Low income carers without a recent contribution record, perhaps due to long periods of unemployment, may be supported through Income Support. These carers may draw further support via the separate Income Support Carer's Component which currently adds £46.97 to their weekly income. In order to meet the requirement for the Income Support Carer's Component and Home Carer's Allowance, the 'cared for' individual must be assessed at Personal Care level 3. These individuals, if also claiming Income Support, will receive a payment of up to £145.25 per week. The Department has recently lodged proposals to allow children meeting the criteria for Personal Care level 3 to qualify for the full value of this payment, regardless of the overall income of their household.

Invalid Care Allowance was a tax funded benefit which was transferred into the Social Security Fund. This move has strengthened the future of the benefit allowing it to be maintained and automatically uprated according to the standard rates of benefit. P101/2012 also addressed this;

“...the transfer of this allowance in respect of working age carers to the Social Security Fund is appropriate for a number of reasons. The value of the current invalid care allowance is already set at the same rate as the contributory benefit rate. The primary purpose of the benefit is to support working age carers who are no longer earning a wage due to their caring responsibilities and so fits well with other contributory benefits which support workers unable to work during periods of incapacity or maternity.

The role of carers is an increasingly important one in our ageing society and including the new home carer’s allowance within the Social Security Law ensures that the value of the benefit will be maintained in line with other contributory benefits and that funding will be available from the ring fenced Social Security Fund.”

HCA, the carer’s component and impairment components of Income Support play a very important role in supporting families and complement the Long Term Care scheme which will facilitate significant change as to how care is delivered in Jersey. The Long Term Care scheme will allow beneficiaries to access a flexible package of care designed to suit their needs, and they may choose whether this is delivered residentially or in their own homes. The new Long Term Care benefit will come into payment on the 1st of July 2014.