

Social Affairs Scrutiny Panel Income Support Sub-Panel

Meeting 3

Date: 24th April 2006

Location: Le Capelain Room, States Building

Present	Deputy J.A. Martin, Chairman Senator B.E. Shenton Deputy G.P. Southern Deputy S. Pitman, Vice Chairman	
Apologies		
Absent		
In attendance	Mr. C. Ahier, Scrutiny Officer Mr. W. Millow, Scrutiny Officer	
Ref Back	Agenda matter	Action
	<p>1. Constitution of Sub-Panel</p> <p>a). The Panel noted the resignation of Deputy F. J. Hill from the Income Support Sub-Panel in order to concentrate on other areas within the Social Affairs Scrutiny Panel remit.</p> <p>b). The Vice Chairman invited nominations for the role of Chairman. Deputy Martin was nominated by Deputy Pitman and seconded by Deputy Southern. There being no other nominations Deputy Martin was elected as Chairman. The Chairman then invited nominations for Vice Chairman. Deputy Pitman was nominated by Deputy Southern and seconded by Deputy Martin. There being no other nominations Deputy Pitman was elected as Vice Chairman.</p> <p>The Sub-Panel agreed to inform the Minister for Social Security of the changes to the composition of the Sub-Panel.</p>	CAWM
	<p>2. Minutes of Previous Meetings</p> <p>The Sub-Panel approved the minutes of the meeting of 21st March 2006 with two amendments:</p> <p>i). Item 4 - Citizens Advice Bureau In the fourth paragraph, before the word 'their' insert the words 'many of'</p> <p>ii). Item 4 – Citizens Advice Bureau In the seventh paragraph, after the word 'provide' delete the word 'a' and insert the words 'an adequate'.</p>	
	3. Action Updates	

	<p>The Sub-Panel noted the action updates.</p>	
	<p>4. Correspondence</p> <p>The Sub-Panel noted the correspondence from the Comité des Connétables as well as recent correspondence received from the Minister for Treasury & Resources in respect of ongoing support to mitigate the effects of GST.</p> <p>The Sub-Panel further noted the submission by Mrs. Denise Carroll and agreed to invite her to meet with the Panel once more detailed proposals were available.</p>	
	<p>5. Age Concern</p> <p>The Panel was attended upon by Mrs. D. Minihane of Age Concern and Mr. B. Le Brocq of the Senior Citizen's Association to discuss the Income Support proposals.</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed Mrs. Minihane and Mr. Le Brocq and explained the purpose of the meeting.</p> <p>Mrs Minihane stated that she would like to see more people have access to help but it appeared the proposals were based on means testing and that this would discriminate against older people as they were reluctant to ask for help and disliked to fill in application forms.</p> <p>Mrs Minihane went on to state that only approximately 2,000 people had signed up for the 'Health Scheme' out of approximately 5,000 who were eligible. In addition there had only been 239 claims for dental care as a result the system which required payment first before financial assistance was available. The small take up had resulted in premiums being paid for people who did not use the scheme.</p> <p>Mrs Minihane expressed concern about the plans for milk at a reduced price for over 70s under the new proposals. She felt that the incorporation of an income bar was unsatisfactory as this would lead to older people losing out.</p> <p>The Sub-Panel went on to discuss the income bar on TV licences to the over 75s. Mrs Minihane stated that in the UK all people over 75 get a free TV licence. Mrs Minihane further expressed dissatisfaction with differing income limits imposed for access to various schemes. She stated that there was no incentive to save as those that did were being penalised.</p> <p>Mrs Minihane raised the issue of 'cash poor, asset rich' people and stated that many were reluctant to claim welfare or ask for help.</p>	

She asserted that there was no means testing on many of the benefits available in the UK so there was no need to go to someone 'cap in hand'. Mrs. Minihane expressed concern that the Christmas Bonus would become means tested or even abolished.

Mr. Le Brocq questioned whether the States would better administrate the new proposals than the Parishes. He felt that the Parishes knew their customers, were able to use discretion and better able to deal with exceptional circumstances.

Mrs. Minihane expressed concern about people's ability to repay grants or loans from the Citizen's Fund. She also expressed concern about the money in question being clawed back from people's estate. A great many uncertainties made older people frightened of the future. Mrs. Minihane stated that whilst the States found money for many worthy causes such as the homeless and drugs users they did not find money for the older people of the Island.

Mrs. Minihane was sceptical that the £5 illness component will reduce 'abuse' of the new system as she felt that HIE had been subject to some abuse. She went on to say that the current disability transport allowance was a poor system which had also been abused. Mrs. Minihane reiterated her view expressed when the scheme was being set up that it should have been a voucher system. Mr. Le Brocq agreed with this view.

Mrs. Minihane stated that she believed the new system would not solve all the problems that currently exist and that older people would still be discriminated against. She further expressed the view that the Jersey pension was not high enough. Adding that although it was higher than the UK pension one visit to the doctor together with the related prescriptions charges would wipe out the perceived local advantage. A great many other factors including the payment of rates and the higher cost of living undermined the value of the Jersey pension.

Mr. Le Brocq stated that past dealings with the States had left his organisation sceptical of the benefits of any new proposals.

Mrs. Minihane stated that although there were a lot of good intentions in the proposals she was unsure if they would deliver the desired outcomes. She further stated that, although her organisation had been invited to two presentations on the proposals and that a representative of the Social Security Department had attended an Age Concern meeting, there had not been any real consultation. Mrs. Minihane stated that with no real substance to comment on the discussions that had taken place had not been useful.

The Chairman thanked Mrs. Minihane and Mr. Le Brocq for attending the meeting and expressed the intention to invite them back for further discussions once more detailed proposals were available.

	<p>The Sub-Panel agreed to send a letter of thanks to Mrs. Minihane and Mr. Le Brocq</p> <p>The Sub-Panel agreed to request information relating to rent abatement/rebate from the Housing Department in order to ascertain age profile and savings levels of their customers.</p>	<p>CAWM</p> <p>CAWM</p>
	<p>6. Jersey Childcare Trust</p> <p>The Panel was attended upon by Mrs. F. Breen of the Jersey Childcare Trust (JCCT) to discuss the Income Support proposals.</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed Mrs Breen and explained the purpose of the meeting.</p> <p>Mrs. Breen distributed a paper detailing childcare costs and related information to the Sub-Panel. She went on to confirm that the JCCT administer the School Aged Discount Scheme which had a 75.8% uptake compared to a 4.11% uptake of the Child Care Allowance system. Mrs. Breen further stated that the amount of parents accessing the Child Care Allowance system is going down all the time because costs mean that it is not worth while going to work. She further stated that the two schemes are administered very differently with Child Care Allowance underpinned by law whilst she believed the flexibility in the School Aged Discount Scheme was an advantage and should be carried through.</p> <p>Mrs. Breen explained that under the new proposals there would be a list of acceptable courses eligible for funding for parents wishing to retrain. The Sub-Panel agreed to request a list of these courses from the Department of Social Security</p> <p>Mrs. Breen commented upon the Allowed Homecare allowance which was paid to mothers not actively seeking work until their child reached 5 years of age. She believed that there should be provision for flexibility and the possibility of extension under the new system. The Sub-Panel went on to discuss the issue of the vulnerability of older children (12 years of age and older). Mrs. Breen stated that the School Aged Discount Scheme was inflexible in this respect but there were also budget restrictions. It was agreed that if budgets could be redistributed there would be the possibility for flexibility.</p> <p>Mrs. Breen stated that there was an issue with money going to parents to pay the provider under the new system. She also pointed out the cost to Social Security of administering the new scheme. This was a role the JCCT had previously played. The Panel discussed the fact that childcare allowance is currently paid in arrears thus causing the recipient to build up a debt. Mrs Breen confirmed that she has met with representatives at Social Security and discussed the administration of the scheme reverting to the department in order to stop the duplication of financial assessment.</p>	<p>CAWM</p>

	<p>Mrs. Breen stated that she was concerned where school aged discount will figure in the new income support components.</p> <p>Mrs. Breen pointed out the training necessary to administer the new Income Support scheme. She further mentioned that savings are not currently taken into account for assessment but as at 30th June 'fair rent' will be taken into account. The Panel were informed that parents currently sign off that information provided can be shared with other parties where necessary and appropriate.</p> <p>Mrs. Breen confirmed that she was happy with the current level of consultation with the Social Security Department but that that there had not been any consultation before.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked Mrs. Breen for attending and informed her that they may invite her back once more detailed proposals were available.</p> <p>The Sub-Panel agreed to send a letter of thanks to Mrs. Breen</p>	<p>CAWM</p>
	<p>7. Future Meetings</p> <p>The Sub-Panel noted that the next meeting would take place at 2:00pm on Tuesday 2nd May in the Le Capelain Room, States Building.</p>	