



Health and Social Security Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Social Security

Thursday, 21st October 2021

Panel:

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

Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour (Vice-Chair)

Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier

Witnesses:

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

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

Ms. S. Duhamel, Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning

Mr. M. MacGregor, Senior Policy Officer 1, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning

Mr. M. Viney, Senior Policy Officer 2, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning

Mr. N. Turner, Senior Policy Officer, Employment and Discrimination Law Policy

[14:02]

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

Good afternoon, everybody, and welcome to the quarterly hearing with the Minister for Social Security and officers. We have officers both in person in the States building, alongside some working remotely. Firstly, I would like to remind people that all the rules that normally apply within the States Assembly apply within this meeting or this hearing. We are going to all introduce ourselves, so those persons who are speaking during the course of this hearing I would ask you to introduce yourself and in order that those listening know your role, to also provide your role. If you are able to as well, when you speak please put on your camera so that people can see who is speaking, which obviously makes it a lot easier for the general public. I am Deputy Mary Le Hegarat, Districts 3 and 4 of St. Helier and I am the Chair of this panel.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour (Vice-Chair):

Good afternoon, Deputy Kevin Pamplin, Vice-Chair of the panel.

Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier:

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

The Minister for Social Security:

Deputy Judy Martin, I am the Minister for Social Security.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Good afternoon, Ian Burns, the Director General of Customer and Local Services.

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:

Sue Duhamel, Head of Policy, the Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning Department.

Senior Policy Officer 1, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:

Mark MacGregor, Senior Policy Officer in the Government of Jersey.

Senior Policy Officer, Employment and Discrimination Law Policy:

Good afternoon, everybody. I am Nic Turner, I am the Senior Policy Officer. I lead on Employment and Discrimination Law Policy.

Senior Policy Officer 2, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:

Good afternoon. I am Matt Viney, Senior Policy Officer in S.P.P.P. (Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning).

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, I believe that is everybody that is going to participate this afternoon and I will start off. Firstly, Minister, it has just been announced that you have a new Assistant Minister in relation to Deputy Maçon, can you please advise us whether he is going to be assigned any particular responsibilities in his role as Assistant Minister?

The Minister for Social Security:

Not specifically because Deputy Maçon is going to help me across the board. But last time he was Assistant Minister he did all the numbers, the stats, Back to Work if there was any interviews. He had a good memory and comparison for the last time, so he is quite happy and said he will take that back on. But, again, I have always said it is a very hard portfolio to just carve out one thing. He

might take on a bit more Back to Work and different schemes we are doing but there will not be any dedicated powers, no.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, thank you. Our topic, we are all familiar now, the next set of questions will be in relation to COVID-19. Please, could you provide the panel with an update on the work of the COVID-19 helpline? How many advisers are employed to work on the helpline and can you confirm if these are permanent positions, part time or zero hours staff?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, I think, Ian, the helpline comes under the new ministry, especially the COVID helpline, not the Social Security line.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Certainly. The COVID helpline has been operating since March 2020. It has gone through a few different variants but right now it is operating with equivalent staff of 19 F.T.E. (full-time equivalent) and there is also on top of that a couple of secondments of the leadership team who run that for me in C.L.S. (Customer and Local Services) who were seconded across. The helpline opens 8.00 a.m. until 6.00 p.m. Monday to Friday and 10.00 a.m. until 4.00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. The panel will be aware that over the period of the helpline being in operation the opening times have changed. The volumes are quite fluid and we have flexed staff up and down, not only in terms of the actual resources working for the helpline but also bringing in colleagues across Government. If you think back to June when cases were heading up to 3,000 we brought colleagues in, almost doubled the size of the resources on the helpline to cope with the volume, to make sure that the public could get through and get some answers. But the 19 F.T. excludes 2 or 3 nurses who work from the Health Department. They are obviously dealing with individuals with symptoms and provide that medical advice and have done always since the beginning back in March. The bulk of staff are engaged through agency and on separate contracts. Their hours have changed from week to week, depending on what is required and the rotas and so on and that has worked well for us and we have not had a problem recruiting. I am pleased we have been able to bring people in, both university students when they were available in the summer but also unemployed candidates from Back to Work have also been able to join and many people have moved on to other roles in Government or other roles with that experience. It is public-spirited thing to have that experience on your C.V. (curriculum vitae). It means that people have been able to find other work off the back of working in the helpline. That has been positive and it has been a flexible response and generally the response from the public has been positive in terms of the service we have provided. The volumes are quite different to other parts of government in terms of the peakness of our calls we get, both in terms of somebody else's news in the U.K. (United Kingdom), that can spike our calls, France changing its

regulations, so it is quite hard to manage the peaks in a way that you would normally expect to manage and that is one of the advantages that we have had in using people on agency for an agency.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

You have already mentioned the fact that you have got nurses that deal with the symptoms side of it, basically what other type of assistance or requests are people asking? What is the general sort of things that people are ringing up the helpline for?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, so in the last 3 months, based on the panel's question, roughly 7 per cent of all calls were around symptoms and investigating symptoms, 19 per cent or 20 per cent were about positive contacts and 21 per cent about travel and testing and the biggest number was nearly 30 per cent on vaccination and certification. There is obviously a bit of a running bit and a hotchpotch of other sort of reasons but that does change. I think back in June there were many more people worried about positives, direct contacts and the like. Since June we have taken over the test and trace calls so that that is not going to a separate team, they are all coming to one place, so I think that has been better and probably makes us more resilient going forward in handling the volume. But that is probably the make-up over the last 3 months but it does change. It has changed today, I imagine, because of the digital certification being withdrawn last night.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Just picking up on that, we have seen this heaps of times, natural as you alluded to, there will be waiting times, how quickly can you activate people? I guess it is difficult because, like you say, there could be a sudden news break or something happened, how quickly can you ...

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

On a day you can obviously ask people to stay on longer, call people in who were due to be working in earlier. Some people perhaps who may be rostered for the weekend can come in on a weekday they were meant to be off, so that can happen. In addition, we can even press the red button and call in colleagues from around Government who have the experience to handle those calls. On the day it can happen reasonably quickly but we know it is a bit more of a trend, so go back to May/June time, okay, to start with we were clear that cases were going to go up, we were able to pull people in from across Government, from C.L.S. in particular, which meant we were, for example, having Back to Work advisers, who would cancel their appointments for the next couple of weeks and they would be on the helpline. That can just take a bit more time that you do not appreciate but, yes, it is very possible. We have good training materials to train people up so they can be ready to handle calls.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

You have started answering the next part of the question which is what has been the impact then by doing that because I see you run a lot of phone calls now for C.L.S.? That has been something you were doing pre-pandemic, have you started to see a bit of an impact when those things happened?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

No. There is a small amount of crossover but on the whole the public understand that the coronavirus helpline is for that purpose and have been calling that. Obviously what we would not do is remove people who are answering the calls in C.L.S., the triple 4 triple 4 number and put them on the helpline unless we were back filling in. The people over the last 18 months who have stepped forward and helped man the COVID helpline, at the very beginning it was a good example, it was Back to Work advisers, it was colleagues from the library, from sports centres and the like who pulled together, because they were closed, and helped man that. Then as we were able to release people, we then had a team who were brought in, specialists for that role and with the right skills and flexibility to help us man that and then as and when we can call people back.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Please, could you provide a breakdown of the costs of the helpline since it was set up in 2020?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes. The business case this year was £700,000, it is all the staff costs. There are no other costs from that perspective, the free phone number, which the Minister arranged to acquire through Jersey Telecom, that is provided by them, so they cover the cost of that, so cost per minute and that is it. The premises are covered by our heads of expenditure or Tech and some of this is also provided by the heads of expenditure, so the COVID bit is just for the people.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Thank you. Per our Government Plan review hearing last week, we were advised about the £500,000 in reserve fund being set aside for the helpline in 2022. From a governance and monitoring perspective, please could you advise how that funding is going to be approved for use?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

I would expect that very shortly we will ... first off it will be agreed in the Government Plan by the States Assembly but after that we will know very shortly whether we will need to run a helpline in the first part of 2022.

[14:15]

I would expect if we wanted to run a helpline for 2022, therefore we would seek confirmation and draw down a fund that is required as we start to operate that service. That is straightforward conversations with the Treasury team about how we bring that down. We have budgeted for, I expect, 12 F.T.E., I think, over the year. Obviously that means we can run a higher level for shorter periods. Since March 2020 there has been a few times when we thought the helpline probably was not needed or we were going to reduce the hours still further and the like and just as you think that happens something else changes and it goes back up again. I am comfortable that we will be able to continue into next year and have the funding and get the sizing right for whatever the issue is.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

You said funding as required, do you mean funding as required from within the £500,000?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Could I just pick up on the free phone number? You say there is an arrangement, an agreement with Jersey Telecom to pick up the cost of that number.

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

That was the one that was a proposition by Deputy Ward, was it not?

The Minister for Social Security:

No, it was a question, it was a States question and I then arranged to meet with Jersey Telecom. As it is short-termish, they have agreed to do that one.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

That is what I will just pick up there, so you have not an agreement written down with Telecom saying it is a contract, so to speak: "I am taking out a contract with Telecom up to a limited time" and they

have agreed to take the cost, they are not going to suddenly turn around and say: "This is costing us quite a lot of money."

The Minister for Social Security:

I would say that they were very helpful and met with us very quickly and because it was COVID and they understood that was something they could do. It is a one-off, now whether that one-off ... they might have thought it would be 6 months, a year but, no, they have not even come back to us and so it is what it is.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, they have confirmed they would be happy to carry on with supporting ...

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Have they indicated what the cost is for running a free phone number? I am just curious because I know this has been tried many times before and, from experience, we are told it is too expensive to do a free phone number. I am just curious that they do not come out and say what the cost may be to get a ...

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

We know what the cost would be if we were to set up a free phone number and pay Jersey Telecom for that privilege and you pay per minute of the calls and it, therefore, can rack up to be many thousands of pounds over 12 months. I think we estimated triple 4 triple 4 would be like £50,000, I think, from memory.

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, from memory, this number would be around that. This is free because they are taking the cost, we are not paying them anything, yes.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, perfect. I am now going to bring in Deputy Alves in relation to appointments with C.L.S. at Philip Le Feuvre House.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Thank you, Chair. Please, could you advise us whether there are plans to reopen Customer and Local Services for walk-ins, i.e. not pre-arranged appointments, in 2021 or 2022?

The Minister for Social Security:

I can give you my answer, Deputy Alves. We are still in the middle of a pandemic, my first and foremost is keeping the public safe and keeping my staff safe who have to pay the money out. When you say walk-ins, it has been open since the middle of last year, you walk in, there is someone on the desk that you can ask about what you want, about anything that goes on in there, as you could before. Then they may need an appointment, they might go over and say: "No, I can do that online" et cetera, et cetera and it is a one-way out. There are quite a few people on the desk doing that. I am not saying it will not open because it will but I, personally, do not want to go back to where people, between 11.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. with a couple of children, are having to sit, pouring their most personal things that have happened to them over the weekend or her husband's left or dah, dah, dah, dah and everyone behind them can hear. I have fought for this for a long time, sort of we were in talks but we now know that people have got a good chance ... find out it is not that hard to do it online, any queries at all, you can be walked through it over the phone. We have got the numbers here of the actual figures that came in, we booked lots to come in and only half turned up because they probably did it another way. I am not saying it is not opening, that was never the best way for people to sit there with the whole ... you have very busy times, you are seeing 3 families in the booths and you have got 50 families behind you and I am as near as I am at this moment to Deputy Le Hegarat behind me. You cannot whisper, kids are screaming. It will open but I hope it will not go back to where it was; that is my political opinion. He runs it but he knows how I feel.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes. The doors are open and we are serving customers in a different way to prior to the pandemic. If I can perhaps share some numbers with the panel it might help to provide some reassurance.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

That would be great because that was my next question.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Prior to the pandemic we were typically getting 700 visitors a day at La Motte Street, of which 300 were handled by what we would describe as our welcome hosts. That would be our colleagues right at the very front of the building who would very quickly triage and find out why people have come in and then deal with them very, very quickly and typically in less than 30 seconds and that was that. We were operating an appointment system, as the Minister has described, despite best wishes we were operating an appointment system and we were getting 400 calls a day over the phone typically and probably 130 submissions of online forms, that brings it to roughly about 1,200, 1,250 interactions with customers on a daily basis. Now, post-pandemic, we are getting 300 visitors a day, which are handled by welcome hosts in the same way they would previously have handled people.

We get 20 booked appointments each day. We get 700 phone calls and the number of online submissions have gone up by 100 to 230, so that is also about 1,200 to 1,250 interactions a day. The same number of interactions with the public, albeit obviously there is a big increase on the number over the phone, starting to have appointments and almost doubling of online form submissions. That gives you, hopefully, the change in the channels that people are using. People have been asking Government to put more things online for some time and the pandemic has helped accelerate that. You can now apply for income support online. Previously you probably would have come in maybe 2 or 3 times to be able to apply fully online because you perhaps come in the first time and you go and get the paperwork and you just bring it in for evidence and then you can submit that online and post the application, so that is an improvement I think. We are trying to have appointment booking online and I am optimistic that should be in place before the end of November. The Minister has mentioned it, the other thing to consider is not everybody wants to come into buildings in a ... if we were operating as we operated before the pandemic, not everybody would feel comfortable coming into that environment right now. We also operate the library, the library is open and is a large building, fantastic community asset but the library footfall is only at 70 per cent of what it was pre-pandemic. That is much improved compared to the U.K., the U.K. I think is 45 per cent, which gives you a flavour that not everybody still wants to go in. Making sure we prioritise our phone service is a priority and, therefore, making sure that people can get through and can get through and obviously book an appointment if they need to. When we have it online that will further ease, I think, people's concerns that they can come and meet with somebody face-to-face and also make it easier and more acceptable for a wider range of Islanders to be able to book appointments and that is something that we are definitely going to have in place. I should say that Eagle House, which has always operated with appointments for job seekers, is open and has been continuing to offer appointments to job seekers and that is something we see from the great results when jobs come through, through Back to Work. They are also running training as well, as they have done in the past for job seekers. Again, we are running training in a different way and the like but, yes, we are definitely open and we have been operating in the way I have described since February 2021.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

That is great. Thank you for that really full answer, I think you have covered a lot of the questions I was going to ask. But just to kind of pick up on just one thing you mentioned there, you were talking about being able to make appointments, arrange appointments online and things like that, so a lot of the things that you have mentioned there, are these ways that you are looking at becoming a sort of a permanent change? Will these things become like a change to the service provided to the public in the long term, based on the experience that you have had during the pandemic?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, yes, absolutely. Prior 2018 there were 75 per cent of Islanders said they wanted to do a few things with the Government online and a large proportion of the population are doing loads of things online, just like the Government. We need to do better at making more services available through that mechanism. But that will also help us free up the time to help support the people who need the most help. What is really important about the way we operate at the moment, if somebody were to present with significant issues we have got a critical support team in place to help them straightaway. If somebody is concerned about being evicted, we will be able to help that individual straightaway, it does not need an appointment, and we will be able to support them. We are still looking for people who need the help and we will prioritise that help most definitely. We have got good examples of where that has happened. People can get through on the phone really quickly, so most calls are answered in 20 seconds for Customer and Local Services and about 20 seconds after going through the menu of options. Where people do have to wait there is a call-back option offered after 30 seconds. I am very comfortable and confident that the telephone response is quick, that means that people can get through to speak to somebody and, therefore, if they are doing a face-to-face appointment can arrange it very easily at the moment. Having that online will help with that most definitely and our call performance is good. Yes, I think if we follow the lead of the public we will have more services online, more transactional things online, that means that the public can deal with the Government at a time and place of their choosing via their phone while they are having a coffee or in the middle of the night, if they wish to. That is what the public have asked and that is what you expect with many other services. But we also need to make sure that we still have the capacity and, as the Minister has described, our appointment system does provide lots of advantages in terms of surety of knowing you have not got to queue up, surety of transportation to get there at the right time and also surety that confidential conversations can take place and the like. We also hope that we can restart our Closer to Home programme, which will start to get services out around the Island, to also provide greater opportunity for Islanders who do not come into town, do not want to come into town but want to see someone face-to-face and have that opportunity. That is something which we have started, stopped, started again and stopped and we are hoping we can get it started and start going round the parishes and operating that in a really good way. Because it also brings in other services and other providers in one place. Anecdotal but very clear evidence that that has really helped some individuals take advantage of other services, they come in for one thing and they see something else and that is good. That is what we hope to be able to get back on to when we can.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay. Just one final question from me before I hand over to Deputy Pamplin and it is around feedback, you mentioned there that the public have asked for a lot of these things, so I am assuming you are collecting feedback from the general public and from your staff about these service changes,

if I am right in saying that. How are you collecting this feedback? How often are you doing it and what type of feedback, obviously aside from what you have mentioned there, have you had?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes. Every single person who calls C.L.S. at the moment are either on the coronavirus helpline or indeed on the triple 4 triple 4 number. At the end of the call they have the option to give us some instant feedback, how satisfied they were with the call, how easy it was and how they feel about that conversation and they have an option to give us verbal anonymous comments. That is a really straightforward way of gathering real time instant feedback and we analyse that of course and respond to the feedback, particularly the verbatim feedback, which is very helpful and we are getting a lot of that feedback.

[14:30]

Obviously overall it is positive of course but there is feedback that has allowed us to make some improvements to various things already. We are measuring, therefore, now customer feedback all the time and that is a massive change, compared to 2 or 3 years ago. We are also rolling it out across other Government departments as well, that is part of our present strategy work. The Government overall will have a much better real time set of feedback from the public about how well we are doing. We also did sample specifically on the question of the services we are providing post-pandemic and we did survey 250 customers in one day and asked people if they would have previously done this particular transaction by coming into La Motte Street and gauged whether they were happy with that service or whether they would prefer to come to La Motte Street; 88 per cent of people said they were happy, would follow this up by doing things online, so that was a helpful snapshot. We have also recently held some more focus panels on a range of subjects, it was run for a different reason but it was very useful in terms of understanding people's views about that. The big survey that was done in 2018 was done independently. I cannot remember the name of the company but it was a range of questions, not just about customer service but that was very clearly saying that people, 75 per cent I think it was, wanted to do things online, a very strong indication from the public that that was the direction of travel. But accepting there was 25 per cent of people who said they did not want to do things online and we must make sure that we are accessible for everybody. I think we have a way of making sure that we can be accessible to everybody but improving our service on a number of areas, such as the Minister described, in terms of confidentiality. Because even though we deploy various techniques and white noise and so on to dampen noise down, there is still a better way of doing things from an appointment basis in there.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

That is great, thank you very much. I am going to hand over to Deputy Pamplin now. Thank you.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Thanks, Deputy. Before I move on to the next question, I have just been sat listening to all of this. This is a subject matter we have talked about since you first introduced it to this panel and been going back and forth. I guess this is my political opinion before I ask my question but do you think there is still a piece of work to do to win across the hearts and minds of Islanders in this? Because we all take Facebook with a pinch of salt but there is one here on Ask, Advise and Advertise, a very active group and says: "I was asked at the end of my call to complete a short survey, could not fault the service I was given, nor the information provided. But I could not find the service to begin with because I was looking for Social Security and I did not understand it was Customer and Local Services." Do you still feel that there could be a transition for Islanders to get through? This is a big change? There have been a lot of changes in the last few years, everything is digital and we are moving quickly but a lot of Islanders are not moving as quick as that. There still needs to be a piece of work to get across that you can turn up. If you are in a state, if you are in a bit of a position where you can need to talk to somebody, we are here, come, we will deal with you, as Ian was just saying. But this may still be a piece of work to do to advise and explain things to Islanders what they are because it sounds really efficient but sometimes it feels like the hearts and minds of Islanders are still bringing this up to us and saying: "We just want to go in and talk about problems in person." It is great you can be efficient but sometimes when you are in an emotional crisis state you just want to see somebody.

The Minister for Social Security:

Absolutely.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I think the perception is we are not being allowed to come and talk to somebody personally because it is an efficient piece. I think there is still work to do online. I know there is this issue today that we are hearing about, which is slightly different. The Government website and the States Assembly website, to be fair, they are not good enough for all the stuff that is being put online. People are being cautious quite rightly. I guess the question is, do you see where I am coming from with those things?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, I do, Deputy. What I am saying is the amount of people who have accused me of not being open and I said: "When did you go down La Motte Street?" "I have not been down, I saw it on Facebook. Your officers are not working." If you have never been down there before you would not know it was not doing what it did do. There are people behind the desk, they are welcoming and, as Ian said, that team, if somebody was vulnerable on the door, really they would be seen. If they

are then there and they say: "What is it? I need to tell you about this." If we know that they can do it online or if they want to make an appointment there and then they will be given one. Then they will have somebody in a nice room off to side where they have not got to go through all that they are talking about with people listening to them and they will get much more attention. The others it used to be quick, I have been there and if I have been taking really delicate cases I phone ahead, of course I am a Deputy, of course I will get a side room. I have to ask and take the thing. Other than that if I have just been asked: "Quick, I need you to come down with me", you sit with everybody else and you can ... as you say, white noise or whatever, children. You are trying to concentrate, your own children are crying and then you are trying to explain what has happened, you have not taken everything in, you do miss something about what to bring back, whereas if you can do it online or even go through it at their own pace over the phone, which most people seem to like. But I will not deny ... are we open or are we shut? We are fully open, we are fully paying out things, we are doing it a different way. Mainly we do need to take that on board, absolutely and get that message out there.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes, I think it is just perspective, is it not, because there are still people who remember going to their Parish Hall and going and getting their claim or their benefits or whatever and it is just this sense of: "It is our Government and I should be able to have a chat with whoever"? I guess all I am saying, as somebody with an objective point of view looking at it in the round, it is a big change and it takes time and there has been a lot going on but there is still a big piece of work maybe that needs to be done to say to people: "We are here, we are your Government at the end of the day, so come in and talk to us and sort it out."

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, there is more we can do, there is more we should have done and can do around communication and I think also having people seeing the appointments available online will be a big help in giving that confidence that they can book an appointment. That will also be of course for our colleagues in Revenue Jersey as well, which is outside the Minister's responsibility but it is also a concern how they get to speak to our tax colleagues, who are currently also operating appointments when you call them.

The Minister for Social Security:

But am I right in saying I think the staff numbers dealing with it are around the same? The people who are then savvy and know what they want and not emotional; they are doing everything online and they may be checking on the phone. Then when you get them other customers with the same amount of staff who can really sit down and talk to them and understand and be sympathetic, have the time to do it, not thinking, they are sitting in front of me, I have got another 10 behind to do and

they are all sort of sitting up there: “What ticket number are you?” You hear it ... it was worse before the tickets, people say: “Who is next?” It was unreal. I just think it gives those more vulnerable people ... we have not increased the staff but we have not decreased the staff and they will just get that extra time with the people that they need to talk to. But I really take your point ...

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Because I think what you are saying, I think we have all agreed, T.V. (television) licence, rates paying, passport applications, all this sort of stuff we want put online but there are certain emotional processes that if you put that online it takes the emotion out of it and sometimes people need to sit down if it is bereavement, it is for loss of job, if it is an eviction. Those sort of processes, you cannot just say: “Just go online” because there is an emotional process and it feels like you are taking the emotion out of it. I guess that is what we are hearing from that public, nobody is faulting the service and where we are going but people are just nervous if that emotion has been taken out of what is, in essence, dealing with big moments in people’s lives.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes. Obviously we spoke last week at the Government Plan hearing a little bit about the system, our big I.T. (information technology) system change, which we are working through. Starting, that will be a real phone benefit when we have that in place sometime in 2024, 2025, to have as much as possible available to be done without ... almost frictionless for people. That allows us then, again, to focus on much more with the people who need the most help. If you have a queue of 8 people, let us say, you do not know which one necessarily needs the most help because 7 of them will probably just be transactions and the eighth one will be wanting a serious chat. If you can get all the transactional stuff online, everybody turns up and you know you can make that time for people and do so in a secure and private way.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I was thinking way ahead and we will get off the subject but the new building that is being proposed by the Chief Minister in the old Cyril Le Marquand House, is this the sort of thing that you would envision there as well? I know it is early days with that big plan.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, yes, it is still early days but, yes, that ...

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, all the officers will know this, it is all being planned to go, yes.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes, but that will not include the old way, as we were just describing it, of walking in and taking your ticket. It will be much more based around what is being developed currently. This is, is that right, the first step?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, absolutely.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Okay. The new employment initiative, now I know this is something you announced on 24th September and it is obviously, what are we, 21st October today but what take up have you had so far for the initiative? I know the employees had to be in place by 4th October to qualify but can you update us on what is the state of that?

The Minister for Social Security:

For the 6 months actively seeking work, we have 72 employees, we were aiming for 79 I think, yes, but we got 72 and the other one for 12 weeks we have got 9 paid and the other one just started last week, was it? We have got 3 for 3 months and 8 weeks. Yes, for 3 months and then actively seeking work we have got one for 8 weeks.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

What would the cost of the subsidy initiative be roughly, based on those figures so far?

The Minister for Social Security:

We pay the job at the going minimum wage. Is it both sides of Social Security or just employers' side?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Just the employees, yes.

The Minister for Social Security:

So 84 in total.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, 84. Yes, so this is part of our fiscal stimulus bid, which is £1.2 million and we originally set out to operate within that bid a 6-month incentive, which the Minister is quite correct, I think that target was 79, so we are almost there. We also have the money for 12-week paid training. In both examples we would support employers taking on longer-term unemployed people, either into a permanent contract or a short-term contract, depending on what the scheme was. We would cover

the cost of minimum wage plus their contributions. In effect, an employer could take somebody on for no financial cost, give them a try and our experience of this, other activity in the past, has been it is a helpful way of, firstly, bringing employers in to think about it and looking at it employing candidates where perhaps they would not in the past looked at people and that meant helping employers give people a chance. It is a good way of making that happen, it is a good way of giving people who have been out of work a long time a real opportunity. Because of the paid training scheme, the 12-week scheme, maybe not having as high a take up as we would have wanted, we have gained support to be able to operate an autumn incentive for a shorter period for October and November and that is available still for people to take people on, a really helpful way of getting staff in prior to the December Christmas period. When we have run this in the past we have found that people have then been kept on, a good chunk of people have been kept on into the new year.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I was going to say the genesis of this is that this has been done before, has it not?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, and we ran a JobsFest back in 2013 and 2014 and so the logic is based upon that.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Compared to that, have you seen many comparisons of any different impacts because of what we are seeing, because of the economic effects of Brexit and also COVID, are we seeing any?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

I think our other offering ... so when we did the JobsFest, that JobsFest was a sort of a major initiative at that particular time, whereas this time round we have had a much more take up of the 6-month incentive and so that is effective but that is with a permanent contract. We would much prefer people to be entered into a permanent contract because there is a very, very good chance after 6 months you are going to be kept on. If we had a choice we would have them all with 6-month contracts, yes, permanent posts.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

What is the feedback from businesses at this stage, what are they saying?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes. We have had some really good feedback. Some good examples, the pandemic has affected lots of people but one of the things it did affect was that a load of people lost their jobs at the same time and, therefore, we have a much higher level of voluntary unemployment than we would normally expect. While it is coming down, of course if you have been out of work for 12 months or more that

is starting to have effects, long-term scarring effects, self-esteem and even with a competitive labour market if you have been out of work for 12 months you are not as attractive as a person who has been out of work for a month or has a job at the moment but looking for additional work. We have got some good examples of people who were in difficult situations who we have been able to get placed and they are very happy.

[14:45]

Yes, we are still providing work support, so all employment advisers will continue to support the employer and the employee individual who has now got a job, so they are employed for 6 months in work support to make sure that if anything starts to become an issue it can be resolved in some way. That may be helping to provide some additional training, giving some coaching time to maybe overcome the issue, some encouragement to get up on time or whatever it may be.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes. You said at the beginning about the conversion rate because obviously the employee benefits financially but how do we know that they convert into jobs? I would imagine at this time of year it is seasonal work, shop work, retail, deliveries, post office, that is Jersey Post, those sort of things, do we have any indication what sort of ... or are they predominantly small businesses who just need that extra support to help get staff into ...

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

We have got 150 employers who have been engaged, not all of them obviously taking people on. We have got 150 employers engaged with various parts of Back to Work at the moment ranging from big to small. Yes, it is everybody. It is probably mainly retail, construction and hospitality, I would say, less so finance; that is probably a fair summary of the list of people I have got in front of me.

The Minister for Social Security:

The majority of jobs are real jobs. No, they are real jobs. As I say, we could place every single one of our people if we could but there are certain roles that people do not want or should not work with very young children, et cetera. But we could not fill all the jobs out there at the moment, I think that I said it last week but, no, they are real jobs, yes.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

You might not be able to answer this, how many are registered as being out of work at the moment?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

The last quarterly figure for Q3 was 990 but of those 360 have some work but they do not have enough hours to satisfy their requirement for income support. That may be that they have got 25 hours and they have the extra 5, so they are still actively seeking work, still being supported, either to increase their hours at the existing business or to take on additional roles. That, therefore, leaves about 600 people who have had no work at all and that, of course, is our priority and of those there will be a number who are long-term unemployed and that is our real priority and that is where these financial incentives are really targeted, to try and get people to give those individuals a chance and all the benefits that comes with it in terms of self-esteem, well-being and a reduction in reliance upon income support.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I guess really the question is, to me, what you just said there, was it 360 roughly who are already in work?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Some of those people would be people who were falling short of making up their income support point of view to ... sorry, to get their contributions up to claim their income support, so really the question would be if there was a downturn and things, obviously got affected again, that there would be a review of that threshold for those people?

The Minister for Social Security:

It has always been the same. If you have got a child under 3½ and no hours, they do not go to school, the 20 hours are now the affected hours, so we ask them to work 15 hours in a week, is it not? Then once that child is 11 it is 25 hours and it has been like that since it started.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes, we do look at everyone on an individual basis but broadly, the Minister is quite correct, people with young children we do not expect them to look for work, although they clearly can, absolutely. But once children start going to nursery and primary school and secondary school then we escalate the number of hours that people have available to work and, therefore, the benefit is designed to assume that if you are able to work and you should. Again, we do assess each individual based upon the number of hours and then put them to do their own individual job goals and what they can do. But, broadly, the ultimate aim is everyone gets 35 hours and when they get 35 hours then they are no longer actively seeking work. That satisfies the balance between receiving financial support from the Government and being available for work and working. Obviously there is a balance of

support from Back to Work employment advisers and all the funding that we have on the table for employers to try and get people into work and with training that takes place and the individual coaching that takes place from their advisers. But there is also a sanctions regime that acts also as an encouragement to make sure that people do look for work and do turn up to appointments and do attend training and the like.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Just as a reminder for me, maybe I should know this, on the point of children under certain ages, is that generic, either partner, as in man or woman or is this only women in relation to children or can it be either?

The Minister for Social Security:

It is one parent, yes, one parent.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Yes, but it can be one parent, either parent.

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Yes, yes, yes, just double-checking because things ...

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, it happened years ago ...

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Yes, yes, yes, just double-checking that first.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

I think they split it between 2 parents before.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Yes, just really that since we were asking those questions I just thought it is one of those things and I thought, okay. No, that is good.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Okay, just moving on then, very quickly on parental bereavement leave, as we know we supported P.70, which was bringing forward proposals to the States on the granting of employees the right to 2 weeks of parental bereavement leave following the death of a child under the age of 18 and to bring proposals to the Assembly prior to the end of March 2022. The obvious question, is there any update on the work and are you on target for that currently?

The Minister for Social Security:

I am on target. Matt is on line, he is doing lots of work and we know lots of things. Deputy Ahier's proposition was a bit ... we need to look at 2 laws or we do not look at any of those laws and we make it, because it affects a small amount of people, that we do not do a big piece of work. Obviously we are gathering all the information that we can at the moment and what is out there on Jersey, et cetera. Yes, I did say I would be speaking to Deputy Ahier as soon as possible. I think we are at least a month off that but we are aiming for something in on March. But once I have spoken to him and we have got some more ... he can help me decide which way he would like to go because we are not going to do it now. He has asked to do the equivalent of something like Jack's Law but I do think it should be more like New Zealand. I have not got the time to do that before the next election, et cetera, but we are on target, yes.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes, that was my next question, so do you envision it to be a proposal you bring back to the Assembly or actual legislation?

The Minister for Social Security:

We are not sure on that one yet.

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:

The March deadline will be a proposal that will be plans, it will not be legislation.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I guess the timelines are too tight with election and possibly ...

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, but we seeing more but, as I say, if they can do it with not too much ... I think with the numbers in mind as well. Now we have got the Government Plan out of the way and officers have got more time, there is a couple of things like this. The next question I think comes to your hours, can really drill down and get some quick wins.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Sure. As part of the consultation for the parental bereavement, will you be consulting the Employment Forum?

The Minister for Social Security:

Not in this part but, again, if we are going to do something bigger and it will affect ... if it was to be paid by employers, et cetera, yes, that would go out but that would be, again, for the next Minister. Any big changes or ... they did the family friendly, they have done that and everything, yes. It is not just minimum wage. I think before we put in the minimum wage if we can get a good minimum wage and benchmark it they might not do that every year, it saves a lot of their time and they could be doing a lot of other things. But the overall outcome from the survey was they want the Employment Forum to do it, not me. It is a good mix, like the mix of the employers and employees, union people, et cetera.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Just so I have got that right, so you are going to meet Deputy Ahier, you are on the way to do that and you are on target towards the end of March to bring the proposal, not legislation, to the Assembly to agree it.

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

The Home Carer's Allowance, so the parity and briefing from your officers back in September about the Home Carer's Allowance, so we noted that the regulation has been lodged, P.91 for those keeping up. As part of the record, could you just clarify why you are proposing to change the eligibility criteria for the Home Carer's Allowance to be based on a maximum number of hours worked a week, rather than a maximum amount worked?

The Minister for Social Security:

Because it was Deputy Southern, again ... the first people we saw were the people this affects is not that many people but it is some who do work on top of their 35 hours. Some of them have got quite good skills, they earn quite a bit of money and I think it is £169 is the amount that they can earn under ... yes, I have got that figure in my head, so it is around £169. The first people and they are still the sort of similar same people come to us and said: "I need to do at least one shift maybe at the hospital or maybe I am doing ... I am on £250 for doing that, it is a 12-hour shift, it is what it is. I cannot do it and I cannot tell them I can only do 4 hours." It has taken to going back ... I think Will is on the ... no, Will is not on the line, Matt on the line, he has taken over now, going backwards and forwards and they said: "Can we not do it by hours?" We had argies and bargies, do not say

that, I should not have said that. You get it, we had a conversation. We came back with 12 hours and then, again, after a lot more conversation they said could they have 15: "We think 15 is reasonable"? Do not forget they are getting paid for looking after someone on P.C. (Primary Care) 3 for 35 hours, so 15 hours on top brings it up to 50 hours, so we think that is reasonable. I have got a few private emails telling me they are very happy and the man from Jersey Carer's Forum has told us that they were happy, so that is the basics. Matt, did you want to add anything?

Senior Policy Officer 2, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:

I do not think so, Minister, you have explained that very well. I think it is important to stress that it is a positive change that was made on the basis of approaches from carers. I think it is a positive thing but I think you have explained that well.

The Minister for Social Security:

If the number is not too low. Have we got an average amount of people this will affect that work with the ... it is quite a low number, is it not?

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:

We think it will only affect a very small number of people.

The Minister for Social Security:

Okay.

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:

Most carers do not work but we do know there are small numbers who have professional qualifications who would like to do a shift a week and we are currently excluding them from being able to claim the allowance or do their work, which seems unfair.

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes. We have completely reversed ... the other one we have gone to hours and we are not really interested in what they earn, as long as they do not work any longer than 15 hours and they have come back and said that is reasonable, yes.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I have no more questions, so I will go back to the Chair.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, minimum earnings threshold, please can you advise whether the introduction of the M.E.T. (minimum earnings threshold) is part of the broader package of changes to the Social Security policy criteria?

The Minister for Social Security:

No, it has got nothing to do with Social Security, it is all to do with revenue and revenue collection from employers, and Ian knows a lot more about it, but it has got nothing to do with the Social Security Fund. I am not going to raise money, anything like that. You tell them what it is for. Sue.

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:

Yes. This small law change is part of the Revenue Jersey programme, which is to introduce a much more efficient way of collecting information and money from employers. It is something called the combined employer return which will be introduced at the beginning of next year and that will mean that employers, rather than having to do one process of I.T.I.S. (Income Tax Instalment System) and a second process in Social Security and a third process in manpower, will have all of those 3 things done in one go on a regular monthly basis, so that is the reason for these changes. There have been small changes to the tax law and to the Jersey Housing and Work Law and the Social Security Law is the last bit of it. There is 3 separate things at the same time but obviously 3 different Ministers, so the pieces of legislation will be coming through separately. Within that Social Security is collected on a quarterly basis, that will change to monthly and, like I say, the employers will be able to fill in one form and do all their calculations in one go. This particular change, as the Minister has said, it is slightly back to front, so the home carers' vulnerability needs are not connected at all. This one is to say rather than the employer having to know how many hours a week people worked and to know whether or not to put people on the quarterly form just for the current situation, which is that employers are just supposed to know the rules. To make it easier for employers we would have a monthly amount of money as the minimum limit, so if you earn less than that a month you do not need to fill that part of the form in. If you earn more than that in a month, then you fill that part of the form in.

[15:00]

It makes it much simpler for employers to know what to do. It means that the Government could check whether the employers are doing it right or not. At the minute we do not check because we do not collect this hourly figure. That is the rationale for the move. As the Minister says, it will have very, very little impact on the amount of money collected from the Social Security Fund, that was not the motivation at all, nor was it a part of any review of the Social Security policy. This is driven by an administrative desire from the Government to make life easier for employers and to simplify and improve the way that the money is collected through Revenue Jersey.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay. Proposal to increase income support, the panel notes the adoption of P.46/2021 on 30th June 2021, which provides increases to a number of income support components in 2021. Is there any income support contingency in place for unexpected rises in inflation as a result of factors such as COVID-19?

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:

No, that was extra.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

The Minister has lodged something, proposals are ready, as you described, to increase components.

The Minister for Social Security:

I think they are asking me if inflation rises a lot higher, am I intending to ... yes, that is the question. Sorry, well, no, I got a certain amount of money from the increases last year and the trade increase, they have gone up now on 1st October.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Yes.

The Minister for Social Security:

Because I have said like last week, except that this year again it is £5 on the first child and then the rest was divided between the other components and then next year it is already set to go up across the board.

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:

I will just explain about the timing.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

2.6 per cent.

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:

We need to think about the election in 2022, which will be in June, which means there will not be an Assembly for some time after that and so the Minister has had to make ... you know, has used the forecast from the Fiscal Policy Panel of inflation in 2022 which means that there will be an increase in October 2022 of income support. If she had not have done that there would not be an increase in October 2022 because there is not time for the new Minister to put it in place. So it is all about

the timing of the election and how you can lodge a proposition. You cannot lodge a proposition that runs across the election this year so we had to do this. This is guaranteeing an increase next year. You are absolutely right, we have had to make an estimate, make a guess, what that increase will be and we may well be wrong - most guesses are normally wrong anyway - but without doing it we would have nothing. So it guarantees a certain amount of extra money for next year and then the next Minister ... there is nothing stopping income support benefits from going up more than once year. For example, Andium rents typically go up in January, they are not going to go up next January but they normally go up in January. If the next Minister saw there had been a period of very high inflation during the rest of this year and the beginning of next year and was worried about that, wanted the States permission to get the money for the budget to pay for it, they could put a proposition forward in the autumn of 2022 to create a benefit increase in January 2023, for example. That is the reason for having to have a go at the 2022 one because if you do not do it you get nothing, so this is guaranteeing some increase and then if there needs to be an adjustment, that is absolutely fine, it can be done later on. That was the rationale for that.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, thank you. Why was the single parent component not uprated in line with the other income support components that have increased by 1.1 per cent?

The Minister for Social Security:

Since it has been reintroduced it has never been uprated. It is one of those ... some people think it does what it says and other people do not think it does what it says so it has stayed the same. I have not looked enough into it. It was taken away, there was a big scrutiny report on it to say bring it back. It does give more money to a single parent, it is £42 something, and I had £3 million - so that was a random amount - to divide by all the other components. Once I had taken the first child ... so I think it is £20 after your first child, you get £20 more on your second child, it has gone up, has it not, and then that is all I had left so that one got left out again. I think the next Minister really needs to ...

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Somebody needs to look at it, is what you are saying?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, absolutely. They are still £40 something a week better off than the rest ...

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

£40.39, I think I have here.

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:

Yes, it is £40.39 and obviously, as the Minister said, you have put up the first child allowance so all parents have the benefit of that on top of their other ...

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, so that is obviously something that needs to be looked at then?

The Minister for Social Security:

Absolutely.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Okay, I am going to hand back to Deputy Alves in relation to the regulation of zero hour contracts.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Minister, following the adoption of the amended proposition, P.32/2021, regulation of zero hour contracts on 12th May 2021, please can you provide an update on the work being undertaken to develop the legislation to ban exclusivity clauses in zero hour contracts by March 2022?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, Deputy, we will be on track and that piece of work that we took out and said we could do by March will be on track and will be done. The other piece of work looking at the whole of zero hour contracts will go out to the Employment Forum because it is understanding across the board when people have said they have banned zero hour contracts and you look at it and they call them something different. I am talking about countries near us like Ireland, et cetera. That was always agreed but the exclusivity part will be brought back and it is on track to be done by March.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

That is great, thank you. The panel notes that in your amendment to P.32/2021 there was a requirement for the Council of Ministers to allocate additional funding in the Government Plan for expert advice. Please could you advise whether this funding has been available?

The Minister for Social Security:

£50,000, sorry I thought it was a person's name.

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:

Yes, £50,000 has been allocated in the Government Plan for 2022.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay, that is great. As part of the work since P.32, has your department consulted with any sectors or local businesses to determine the impact on their workforce of banning the exclusivity clauses in the zero hour contracts?

The Minister for Social Security:

No, we have not.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Has any other work been done in relation to the zero hour contracts or are you just solely concentrating on that clause at the moment?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes, as I say, we have lots of little bits. With Deputy Ahier, this. All the little bits I am getting through before the end of this term and the other big piece of work is to look completely at the whole of zero hour contracts and that will start in the new year. I may get the report back but I probably will not be the Minister to bring it through, Deputy.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Okay, that is great. That was all from me so I am going to hand back to Deputy Pamplin. Thank you.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I wanted to pick up on something that we got out of the Government Plan Review Hearing you held last week. That is the sustainability of the existing Health Insurance Fund and the review that has not happened this year but there would be actuarial review next year. We just wanted to mop up from that. Can you just confirm that we got that correct and who made the decision not to commence the review, just to help us from last week's hearing?

The Minister for Social Security:

I did say, and I still stand by it, I want to leave the funds, all of the funds, in as good a position as they were when I came. I know this is the only fund that may do something else with health. Ideally they want to put all the health money in one place. It is more health are deciding what we need and then I can transfer the money. It might not be a Health Insurance Fund so I did not review it, it still has quite a few years' money in it.

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:

You mentioned an actuarial review. It is not an actuarial review of the fund next year, that is not due for another couple of years. What happened this year is that working with the Health Department it

was not possible for the Health Department to do the level of detail they wanted to forecast future health costs. They have got this work now fully underway. They have staff to do it, they have the money to do it so that is what is planned for next year. It is a big job. I think perhaps they had underestimated the size of the task. So we have now have that ... not us, but the Health Department has that fully resourced. That is what is going to happen next year. I think we are due to meet the Minister for Health and Social Services team so they will have more information about that. That is where we are. In terms of the Minister, as you say, there were plans in this Government Plan to make another transfer from the Health Insurance Fund to support the Jersey Care Model funding and that is absolutely fine. That has been well looked after in terms of how the money has been used. The bigger picture piece is going to be run through the Health Department.

The Minister for Social Security:

Can I just correct something there, Sue, because I probably misled the panel? I did say all the funds going forward under actuarial review before the new Government come in every 4 years. I may have misled you, sorry, that is how I had understood it.

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:

Sorry, that is a very good point. The law currently says a 5 year review, yes, and we are trying to do 4 year reviews on the other 2. We need to make a decision about the Health Insurance Fund. Given the significant changes that are planned for it, it may be not very good value for money for the public to do an actuarial review while the fund is in such a state of flux.

The Minister for Social Security:

But the other big funds will be ...

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:

The other 2 will be done, sorry.

The Minister for Social Security:

Sorry, I thought it was all the funds.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Something else we said last week was the 13 million has not been transferred across yet, is that right? That was based on you seeing the report from the Health Department, which you have now seen - we have not seen it - so you are preparing to transfer. Do we know when you will do that?

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

The health team met with the Minister the day before the hearing on the Government Plan and we will be updating the Minister going forward on a regular basis alongside the Minister for Health and Social Services. That would give the comfort that the Minister can authorise and approve a transfer towards the end of the year to the Health Department based on what the work has actually delivered and what the expenditure is. That is the plan and there will obviously be, in the Government Plan, further transfers proposed for next year and they will operate on the same basis should the States agree the Government Plan.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Will the criteria remain the same? I am just trying to get my head around what you said. For each transfer out of H.I.F. (Health Insurance Fund) as it currently stands, in the current format, it needs to be reviewed by the Minister before doing so?

The Minister for Social Security:

They give me a high level ... my officers will go down to the paperclips and then they will tell me - that is true - it is safe to transfer that money across. That was high level and that is what you will get. My officers need to know it has been spent, that it is right and then that is when it ... whether it is in one tranche or a few tranches, when they are quite satisfied that is when it will go across.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

This 30 million is for the work that has been done so far?

The Minister for Social Security:

Yes.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

But what we do not know is the money they will need for next year yet, is that right?

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:

That is right, so making the transfers at the end of the year seems odd because you think they would need the money first but the Government does not really work like that.

[15:15]

The Health Department are not short of money, they just need to have had the money before the end of the year so making the transfer at the end of the year is really sensible because it means that we can check that they spent what they said they were going to spend or if they had not been able to spend it then we do not transfer that amount of money. We need to make sure we transfer the

right amount of money so you do the transfer once, right at the end of the year, and the same thing will happen next year. The law allows the money to be up to that amount of money each year so they cannot spend more, they can spend up to. So we check in December exactly what has been spent and we give them that amount of money. That balances their books for the year, that is what they need.

Director General, Customer and Local Services:

Just imagine a scenario where let us say, because of COVID, no work took place on the Jersey Care Model this year they would not then spend any money so the Minister would not transfer anything. If you transfer £30 million it is quite hard then to get that money back out. I am not suggesting health would not give it us but just getting it back into the fund is tricky. That is why we do it that way.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Okay, I guess without having the review, let us just say there is an election next year and a new Government sweeps into power and scraps the whole thing, what will happen then? What will be the criteria? If the review has not happened and the care model falls away, what would be the scenario then?

Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning:

That is what Ian has just explained is that if they stopped working halfway through next year because they could not politically do it, we would only give them the money for the work that had been finished. So there would be some work that had been done. It is a very safe way of doing it.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Okay, thank you, that is it from me.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

I think that is it from us.

The Minister for Social Security:

We have got Saul McGinty dialling in to take you through ... do you want that ...

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Yes, that is not ... we need to complete our public hearing first.

The Minister for Social Security:

Sorry, I thought you had.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Have you got anything else to tell us?

The Minister for Social Security:

No, no, sorry.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

That is our conclusion for this afternoon. Thank you, Minister, and thank you to the officers who contributed this afternoon. Thank you to the panel, also to the officers from the States Greffe and to those who listened this afternoon. Thank you.

[15:16]