

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 15th MARCH 2021
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 22nd MARCH 2021**

Question

Will the Minister inform members –

- (a) what estimate, if any, she has of the proportion of those people with a disability that severely reduces their quality of life who are currently in receipt of the two benefits that are targeted at disability (i.e. Long Term Incapacity Allowance (L.T.I.A), and the personal care components levels 2 and 3); and
- (b) what plans, if any, she has under consideration to prevent discrimination against those with a disability and to improve their quality of life?

Answer

(a)

Long-Term Incapacity Allowance (LTIA) is paid to people who experience long-term illness or disability during their working life. It is based on a person's Social Security contribution record and is paid out of the Social Security Fund. Benefit is paid on a percentage basis, based on an assessment of the loss of faculty of the person.

The personal care element of the impairment component of Income Support is a tax-funded benefit. This component of Income Support is paid at three levels, and is available to households who meet the other criteria to qualify for Income Support. It is available to people of any age. Families of children who qualify for the two higher levels of personal care assessment can receive a benefit on a non means tested basis. The level of the component is based on a functional assessment of the person.

The Minister is not able to estimate the proportion of people with a disability that severely reduces their quality of life who are currently in receipt of these two benefits. The assessment criteria for these benefits do not make direct reference to reductions in a person's quality of life. They are assessed on the basis of loss of faculty (LTIA) or loss of function (personal care). Loss of faculty and/or function may or may not result in a reduction of "quality of life"; this is a subjective measure that takes account of how the person feels about the effects of their illness or disability. It is not quantified through the benefit system.

(b)

The Discrimination (Jersey) Law 2013 was extended to cover disability discrimination in September 2018, with additional rights coming into force in September 2020. The Law provides protection and a means of redress for those who live and work with the protected characteristic of disability, who believe their rights have been compromised. The Jersey Employment and Discrimination Tribunal (JEDT) considers these cases. 35 of the 98 discrimination claims lodged with the JEDT were in respect of discrimination issues in 2019. Given the recent introduction of these comprehensive legal rights, the Minister has no plans to further amend these rights at present.

The Minister holds political responsibility for the delivery of the Disability Strategy. The strategy was developed in partnership with disabled people and focuses on 5 main priorities, to improve the quality of

life for disabled islanders:

- Have support to communicate and access information
- Have greater access to the island
- Have good health and wellbeing
- Have access to education, employment, and enriching activities
- Have equal rights and experience equality

Each of these areas will help to enhance the quality of life of disabled islanders. The strategy is supported by an implementation group which consists of disabled islanders, voluntary and community organisations, private sector representation and Government of Jersey officers from a range of departments. The Government Plan includes a funding commitment to deliver the Disability Strategy.

The delivery of the disability strategy was affected by Covid-19. However, as Jersey moved through the Safe Exit Framework implementation could recommence and during September and October 2020 the following progress was made.

- 2 Disability Inclusion Officers have been appointed as well as a Project manager
- The implementation group has met in person and virtually and agreed to form 5 working groups around the key priority areas and meet as a whole 2 or 3 times a year subject to restrictions
- The Learning Disability Cluster has now joined the disability implementation group
- The disability implementation group are linking with Liberate to form an access panel to advise and train organisations around accessibility
- The disability implementation group are working with Volunteer.je and The Bosdet Foundation to develop a community volunteer driver scheme for both individuals and organisations
- Funding has been obtained by organisations from the Jersey Community Foundation to support employment projects for disabled islanders
- A television awareness campaign aired over Christmas and into 2021 to raise awareness around disability discrimination
- The GoJ worked in partnership with the Jersey Employment Trust to provide access to data for Disabled Islanders who were/are shielding

The disability implementation group will focus on the below actions as per the Government Plan for 2021 while reviewing progress to date and mapping out the delivery of the strategy.

- Ensure that discrimination legislation is provided in accessible formats – including British Sign Language
- Establish a reference group of disabled volunteers to advise on accessibility of buildings. Train group to provide advice & guidance and support an island access audit
- Introduce a community-based post of volunteer driver co-ordinator to set-up and manage an island-wide volunteer driver scheme
- Promote opportunities for disabled Islanders to be active citizens - For example as jurors, board members, elected representatives
- Establish a working group to promote disability awareness island-wide, including work with media outlets
- Co-ordinate an annual event where disabled Islanders can share their experiences with elected members. This may have to be virtual

The Minister is also undertaking a review of Jersey's Incapacity benefits during 2021. This review aims to modernise the system to offer targeted and timely support to people who experience sickness or disability during working life.

