

Income Support Scrutiny Sub-Panel,  
Scrutiny Office,  
Morier House,  
Halkett Place,  
St. Helier,  
JE1 1DD

8<sup>th</sup> February 2009

### **INCOME SUPPORT**

Dear Sirs,

Following the recent negative publicity in the local press I write with my positive experience of the system.

Following the introduction of the scheme my 94 year old mother, who had been in receipt of HIE, received a bill from her doctor for the small amount of £3. Whilst able to pay this, my wife and I attended the Social Security offices to query why this wasn't covered by the new scheme. The young lady at the desk attended to us both helpfully and politely. It transpires that the bill was an "admin" charge for a repeat prescription that isn't covered by Income Support. I would have thought that it should be covered, as it was previously, but in my mothers case it hasn't been a problem as she has been regularly seen by the doctor since then.

Whilst at the offices I also raised our concerns that under the new system my mother was only covered to the value of four visits to the doctor each year. As she is unable to attend the surgery in person we were concerned that this benefit would not last long with home visits. We were, however, assured that this was the basic medical benefit and it would be topped up if needed. This has happened, with no intervention on our part, and it would seem that this part of the new scheme is working successfully.

Following that visit we had a more major problem to overcome. For many years my mother has been in residential care and has been part self funded with the remainder, the larger sum, being paid for by my wife and I. Due to my impending retirement, coupled with my wife's, we were concerned about the family's ability to continue with this arrangement. I subsequently wrote to the Department outlining the situation and asking for help. This has been forthcoming and following a review of my mother's finances she is now in receipt of help with her funding.

I have to say that the process hasn't been too difficult for us. Nobody likes filling in forms and the Income Support application can be a bit daunting at first sight. As with any "catch all" form there are parts which don't apply to everyone, but with a bit of working through it wasn't too difficult to complete. We have no problem with disclosing Mother's income, after all we are asking for public money, and have only asked for what she is entitled. In addition, we have been careful to inform the Social Security department of any changes to her circumstances.

In conclusion, we have had a positive experience of Income Support. This, I am sure, is due to my wife and I being in a position to help my mother with the form filling and collation of her finances.

Because of this I have no experience of what help is available to others, but if applicants are unable to cope with the application procedures then thought should be given to how they can be helped..

It would, I am sure, be difficult for Social Security staff to be involved in helping with applications

and subsequently judging their merit. I would hope that both the Parishes and Citizens Advice already play a part and if they need further resources then perhaps some form of State funding could be made available to them.

It is important to remember that when Income Support is needed the process starts with the blank form, not after it has been received.

I hope that this is of some help.

Yours faithfully,