STATES OF JERSEY

ASSESS AFFORDABILITY OF QUALIFYING STATE PENSIONERS RECEIVING HOME CARERS ALLOWANCE (P.27/2026): COMMENTS

Presented to the States on 4th March 2026
by the Council of Ministers

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

Following work over several months, the Minister for Social Security has recently published a report which very clearly sets out the reasons for not making changes to the rules in relation to Home Carers Allowance (HCA) and Overlapping Benefits – Ministerial review of support for unpaid carers and people with care needs – Report on findings but does emphasise practical changes that have been made and are planned to better support unpaid carers.

While acknowledging that the Deputy is well-intentioned in his proposition the Council of Ministers urge States Members to reject all three parts.

Part (a)
The first part of the proposition proposes gathering data on the number of pensioners who would be entitled to receive HCA. An HCA claim requires an assessment of both the person receiving care and the type and amount of caring undertaken by the carer. The care assessments have to be carried out by Health Care professionals. Therefore, to gather this information across the entire pensioner population (there are circa 20,000 pensioners currently claiming their Old Age Pension) would require significant additional resources and would be of no benefit to the individuals involved. The Deputy's proposal for a new benefit in 2028 means that new assessments would be needed at that point. The assessments to gather data would also divert specialist health resources away from frontline care at a time when the health service remains under significant pressure. This would be a very poor use of public funds and resources as the exercise would be wholly theoretical, principally because the proposal to pay this benefit to individuals who are already receiving an Old Age Pension from the Fund runs counter to the fundamental principles of the Social Security scheme. The scheme – which is a worker's insurance scheme – is balanced on the principle that no one can access more than one benefit based on one amount of contributions. It would be unfair to other groups to use the Fund in this way. HCA is available to people who become carers before pension age, if someone retires and then becomes a carer they continue to receive their OAP i.e. HCA as a working age benefit, is not available. However, HCA does include a unique concession which allows an individual – when reaching pension age - to top up the value of a partial Old Age Pension to the full value of HCA, while they continue to act as a carer. The introduction of a new pensioner HCA may well require additional contributions from working age people and local businesses. Pensioners themselves do not pay contributions into the Social Security Fund. Additionally, this proposal would be of no help to carers of a working age.

Part (b)
Part (b) of the proposition proposes the possible use of the Reserve Fund to meet the cost of this extra benefit. A key role of the Social Security Reserve Fund is to help meet the increasing costs of old age pensions as the Island moves through the current demographic bulge associated with the ageing population. The Minister for Social Security has already initiated a major review of the Social Security Fund and Social Security Reserve Fund to identify the actions that we need to take to maintain the sustainability of the Fund for future generations. This review will be complete in time for the new Government to review and take action.

The Deputy's own calculations include annual costs of up to £75,000,000 a year, which would be a very significant additional burden on the overall Fund at a time when pension and health costs are increasing year on year.

Part (c)
The third part of the proposition proposes a single transfer from the Social Security Reserve Fund. Any new liability to be met from the Fund must be funded every year and must be accompanied by a sustainable funding stream. This would create an ongoing pressure on the Fund and the need for repeated drawdowns from the Reserve Fund. This part of the proposition also relies on having the outcome of part (b) before being committed to and moreover, would require a significant budgetary commitment from an incoming Government.

Recent changes to support for carers
The proposition and accompanying report make no mention of the actions that the Minister for Social Security has recently taken, following consultation with individual carers and carers groups. These actions are all achievable within existing budgets, address specific challenges that carers face today, and are fully sustainable.

This additional support includes:

- A dedicated advisor to provide carers with individual advice and direct them to support services that are available to them from 23 February
- A new dedicated page on the Government of Jersey website to bring together all information on support for carers
- A Carers Connect Me event on 17 March to bring people together and share information and resources.

As well as providing additional practical support to carers, several aspects of the Long-Term Care (LTC) scheme have also been improved to better support people with care needs and their carers:

- LTC benefit payments can now be made directly to individuals or families, so they have the flexibility and choice to manage their own finances
- There is more flexibility in the make-up of care packages so part of the overall benefit can be paid directly to the individual or to an informal carer on their behalf, to help meet specific costs for the person with care needs
- We have improved the communication around LTC respite costs - when an approved care package includes support from unpaid carers, a weekly sum can be reserved to create a respite budget to cover the cost of the unpaid carer taking a complete break from time to time. The LTC team have updated this part of the application process to make sure that every family is given full information in respect of respite funding.
- Making sure that carers know that a weekly sum can be set aside from a care package to provide a respite budget to cover the cost of providing care while they take a complete break from time to time

The Employment, Social Security and Housing Department has also made good progress in terms of developing relationships with carers groups and informal (unpaid) carers as part of this work and will continue to work with them going forward.

For example, one of the key points that the Minister for Social Security received feedback on during the review, was the importance of respite services, particularly for people with high care needs – the Minister has therefore urged the next Government to address this as a priority. If any additional funding is available, the provision of extra respite facilities may well be of more practical benefit to all carers compared to providing higher cash payments to pensioner carers.

Existing support for Pensioners
The Deputy's proposition ignores the fact that Home Carers Allowance (HCA), as a contributory benefit, is not means tested so it is not targeted to those in need of financial support. Lower income pensioners receive a range of extra financial support with heating, health and general costs through a range of means tested benefits. These benefits are not available to higher income pensioners, and they are paid from general revenues.

Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (JOLS)
The Minister does feel it is important to try and better understand how many informal carers there are in Jersey and has taken steps to do this. An application has already been made to include questions on caring in the 2026 JOLS. The final choice of question areas is determined by an independent panel, and their allocation will be finalised before the end of March. If the application is successful, the Government will gather good quality data across a statistically valid sample of local households which will be published at the end of 2026 and can be used to help plan any new services for carers.

Conclusion
Members are urged to reject this proposition. The Minister for Social Security has already set out the reasons why the overlapping rules in relation to HCA should not be changed and action has already been taken to support carers and more work is planned. The Social Security Fund is undergoing a major review at present, and part of this review will look at the longevity of the scheme for future generations. The type of work being asked for in this proposition to identify the potential eligibility of pensioner carers today would require resources to be diverted from front line health and care services. This is not considered to be a prudent or efficient use of resources as it would lead to no better outcome for the people concerned.