

# OPEN AGENDA PUBLIC DOCUMENT

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No: 61/2017

## Memorandum for Executive Council

### SUBJECT

Social Security (Amendment No 2) Regulations, 2017

Memorandum by Chairman, Social and Community Development  
Committee

### ADVICE SOUGHT

**1. Council is asked to advise:**

***a) whether the attached Social Security (Amendment No 2) Regulations, 2017 should be endorsed; and***

***b) whether the attached Welfare Assistance and Children in Need Policy (Welfare of Children Ordinance 2008) should be endorsed.***

### BACKGROUND & CONSIDERATIONS

2. The Social Security Ordinance (2010) provides social protection for the majority of people who need assistance based on a household definition and calculation. However, it has become clear that in some cases the current regulations do not protect vulnerable people and negatively impact upon other key strategic issues and policy intentions.

3. To address the concerns raised by Non-Government Organisations, Elected Members and the Community, the following was endorsed by the Social & Community Development Committee, namely:

- Change the current Regulations in the Social Security Ordinance 2010 as outlined separately
- Introduce a Welfare Assistance Policy
- Introduce as part of the Welfare of Children Ordinance (2008 ) a Child in Need Policy

**4. Household Income Changes**

The Regulation changes as attached intend to widen the categories of income into the family home that are disregarded in certain cases. These include:

- Where a young person under 21 is working or studying – *disregarded in full*
- Where an individual is receiving carers allowance, Better Life Allowance or Occupational Therapy Allowance – *disregarded in full*
- Any Disabled Pension paid by the Government of St Helena – *disregarded in full*
- Any one off payment from whatever source – *disregarded in full*
- Any new income received by the applicant or member of the household from whatever source where; (*disregarded for two weeks*)

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- (i) The Safeguarding Directorate has determined that exceptional hardship would be caused if the new income was to be taken into account immediately; and
  - (ii) No member of the household has previously had income disregarded on this grounds in the past 12 months
- Earnings (full or part time, casual or regular and irrespective of employer). *The first £10 for each person with earnings shall be disregarded and the remainder taken into account.*
  - Self-employment earnings. *The last six months earnings (as required to be declared for tax purposes) shall be used to calculate an average weekly sum, of which the first £10 shall be disregarded with the remainder taken into account.*
  - Pension, any type of pension benefit, including Basic Island Pension, United Kingdom state pension, St Helena Government pension, other employer pension or any personal pension - *Taken into account in full.*
  - Any other income, however received, including regular payments from children, children paying for services including electricity, telephone or other services. *Taken into account in full.*
  - Money held in a Child Savings Bond at the Bank of Saint Helena. *Disregarded until the earlier of when the funds are withdrawn or the owner of the Bond reaches the age of 22 and thereafter taken into account in the total assets under Item 3*
  - Property on St Helena or abroad, other than the dwelling in which the household resides- *Taken as the current market value of the property and treated as part of the total asset.*
  - All other assets including bank accounts, stocks and shares, cash, held either on St Helena or abroad. *Ignore the first £3,000 then assume an income of £1 per week per £1,000.*
5. St Helena currently does not have a Welfare Assistance Policy for those people who for whatever reason find themselves in a very vulnerable position. Often their needs are met by the dedication of Non- Government Organisations, however more needs to be done to undertake assessments and tackle the root causation factors.
6. **A new Welfare Assistance Policy**  
A new Welfare Assistance Policy would provide two weeks of Daily Living Expenses through a voucher system as outlined as well as a Settlement Grant. Both schemes would be managed and facilitated by professionals with the support of key Non- Government Organisations. The policy intention is to meet emergency need and to prevent further episodes through bespoke support following an assessment. It should also be noted that this policy differs from the Children in Need Policy for the following reasons;
- Family may not be open to Safeguarding Services
  - Policy is for a defined period of two weeks whereas the Child in Need Policy could be for a considerably longer period
7. The Welfare of Children Ordinance (2008) has provision for Children in Need (as defined in the attached policy), however, this

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has not been supported by policy or funding in previous years which leaves a significant gap in the welfare of vulnerable children and young people.

8. Both of the above policies will be delivered through professional assessment, evidence and based upon need. This will enable further proactive and preventative approaches to be adopted on St Helena.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9. The projected financial implications for the change in regulations based on the evidence collated is £20k PA. This additional amount can be financed through the existing and approved budget.
10. However, potential savings from other areas do need to be considered. For example, the regulations will reduce pressure on the current housing stock and not penalise people who care for elderly and disabled people in their homes which could present as a significant cost to St Helena Government if they were moved to residential care.
11. The financial implications of the two proposed policies will be mitigated by the change in regulations but will provide a targeted level of support to address causation factors and reduce the long term dependency on charity and benefits. The current system does not 'break the chain' and through targeted support those longer term needs should be reduced.

### ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

12. The economic implications are that by supporting wider strategic aims such as housing and homecare, St Helena is addressing short, medium and longer term fiscal issues, while encouraging youth employment and education.
13. By supporting people who act as carers, St Helena is recognising a 'quiet' workforce without whom the already tight labour market would be further stretched.

### CONSISTENCY WITH INVESTMENT POLICY PRINCIPLES PUBLIC / SOCIAL IMPACT

14. The proposals are consistent with the following investment policy principle:  
*Setting parameters for development to safeguard what is important for the people of St Helena*
15. The public and social impact will see vulnerable people protected further and supported as well as those who care for vulnerable people not penalised for enabling them to live in their home.
16. It will, in some cases, allow family units of various makes-ups to remain living together and not remove vulnerable people's independence. The change in regulation could also reduce the risk of homelessness for young people.
17. The Welfare Assistance Policy and the Child(ren) in Need Policy will provide assessed support to vulnerable people and engage key professionals to address causation factors. This will have a positive impact on the cohesion of the community and address some deep rooted issues.

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### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

18. There is no environmental impact.

### PREVIOUS CONSULTATION / COMMITTEE INPUT

19. The proposals were endorsed by the Social & Community Development Committee on 13 September 2017 following engagement with Non-Government Organisations and key statutory agencies.

20. Targetted consultation took place with Making Ends Meet, The Human Rights Office and The Salvation Army as key partners/stakeholders who were positive and supportive of the proposals.

### PUBLIC REACTION

21. Public reaction is very likely to be positive as this was a significant issue in the recent General Election.

### PUBLICITY

22. Following Executive Council's decision, a series of communications and channels are required to inform the public of these changes and crucially how to access the available support.

23. Clear messaging is required from Elected Members around the rationale for the changes, as requested by the Social & Community Development Committee; Officials will be invited to work with Elected Members on any media interest and produce a timeline and information sheet.

### SUPPORT TO STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

24. The proposals meet the following National Goals;
- Altogether Healthier
  - Altogether Better for Children and Young People
  - Altogether Safer

***INITIALS OF PRESENTER***  
***AAG***

### OPEN /CLOSED AGENDA ITEM

25. This is recommended for Open Session.

### DATE OF MEMO

27<sup>th</sup> September 2017