

**2.15 Deputy S. Pitman of the Minister for Social Security regarding the completion and return of Income Support application forms:**

Would the Minister inform Members how many people have contacted the department to request assistance in completing the new income support forms, how many have still not been returned and what will happen to those who do not return them by the department's stated deadline?

**Senator P.F. Routier (The Minister for Social Security):**

I cannot tell Members the number of people who have specifically requested assistance with completing the transitional form which is being used to obtain information from existing beneficiaries. The department has not been collecting that particular information, although I can tell Members that the department is currently dealing with about 30 to 40 inquiries a day about income support, whether it be through phone calls, letters or visits. Some 6,239 forms have been issued and over 3,300 have already been returned. I would encourage anyone who has received a form to return it as soon as possible. The department is obviously monitoring the return of forms and will be sending out a series of reminders to those who have not returned the form, so as to ensure that everybody has the opportunity to do so and is aware of the consequences of not returning a form. If anyone chooses not to submit a form, income support cannot be paid from the date of implementation and it would not be possible to calculate and pay the protected benefit which has been promised. The department will treat claims received after the implementation date as new claims to Income Support.

**2.15.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Is the department prepared to make temporary payments to those who fail to meet the deadlines his department is setting?

**Senator P.F. Routier:**

If anybody comes to the department after the implementation date they will be assessed as a new Income Support claim.

**2.15.2 Deputy J.A. Martin:**

That slightly concerns me because I thought before they go live that the Social Security Department should absolutely make sure that everybody who is already receiving benefit is on the new system; people who come in after, I appreciate that cannot happen, Sir. Would the Minister confirm that there is maybe some difficulty down at the department at the moment, or update us with the transfer of staff from the St. Helier Welfare? I think they were expecting 10 new staff to join and be trained up in the new system. I have heard - and it is just a rumour, Sir - that this is now not occurring.

**Senator P.F. Routier:**

Rumours are rumours, Sir, and I do not think Members should take note of rumours. The St. Helier staff have agreed to join us and they are being slotted into the positions which are available within our department. If a member of staff from St. Helier decided they did not want to come to us that is certainly their choice, but the last we heard they have all agreed to come to us. We are not experiencing any problems with dealing with the workload at the present time and everything seems to be on track to ensure that we do implement on 30th July. I am pleased to have this question today, because I do really want to ask people to return their forms and we do want to help people to ensure that they can fill in the forms. The departments are ready, willing and able to help people to complete the forms.

**2.15.3 Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Will the Minister advise the House what proof of identity will be required before a claimant is able to benefit from the income support scheme?

**Senator P.F. Routier:**

The proof of identity is an issue that we do take very seriously and the proof of identity would be either a passport or other photographic identification, but that is the proof of identity.

**2.15.4 Deputy I.J. Gorst:**

Could the Minister confirm that the S.L.A. (service level agreements) have now been signed with the other Parishes which will be helping with the implementation and payment of income support and whether those Parishes are satisfied with those agreements? Thank you.

**Senator P.F. Routier:**

I have been meeting with the Constables quite recently. It appears that we are having, obviously, dealings with Parishes who are going to be providing more of a service than others. Three Parishes are working on a more detailed service level agreement, which are St. Clement, St. Brelade and St. Saviour, and we are finalising that document for the service level agreement to be signed. The other Parishes will be signing a different level of service level agreement. But they have not been signed as yet, but will be in the very near future.

**The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):**

Now, we are nearly out of time, but I think just to allow Senator Shenton to ask his question I will just allow one more question on this one which is Deputy Pitman, who asked the original question.

**2.15.5 Deputy S. Pitman:**

How is the department encouraging those people who are not currently claiming benefits who could potentially claim Income Support?

**Senator P.F. Routier:**

We are introducing a public awareness campaign which will be starting very soon and making sure that people are aware of the new Income Support system. The final date when that kicks-off has not been finalised yet. Obviously, what we need to do within this House is to ensure that we have debated the Regulations, and we know exactly what we will be telling people. So when the Regulations have been debated here we will then be in a position to inform people of the exact detail of the scheme.

**The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):**

We come, finally, to the question Senator Shenton will ask of the Minister for Treasury and Resources.

**Senator B.E. Shenton:**

Can I just ask who is going to be answering this question?

**The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):**

I assume it is the Assistant Minister, is it? Are you answering?

**Deputy J.A.N. Le Fondré:**

Yes.