

2.2 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier of the Minister for Social Security regarding the effectiveness of Income Support in lifting couples with children out of relative poverty:

Will the Minister state how effective income support has been in lifting couples with children out of relative poverty and will he illustrate his answer by giving comparisons between the amounts received by families with one, 2 and 3 children (in £5,000 annual income bands from zero to £25,000) under the former family allowance system, and those receiving child components under I.S. (Income Support)?

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

This question refers to relative poverty and I am pleased to take this opportunity to announce that the Statistics Unit has agreed to undertake an income distribution survey in 2009. This survey will provide valuable information on income and relative poverty levels in Jersey and it is hoped that it will be repeated on a regular basis. Until we have a new income distribution survey it will not be possible to calculate relative poverty levels in Jersey. However, a detailed report analysing the impact of income support was circulated to Members on 4th June this year. This report includes a section on couples with children on pages 12 and 13. The question requests a comparison between family allowance and income support. It probably should be said that this is not a useful comparison as income support provides assistance not just with the cost of bringing up children but also with living costs for adults, with housing costs and medical costs. It is also unusual to request this level of numeric information in an oral question. My department officers and I have been working over the weekend to provide some figures but as there are 45 different numbers required to answer this question I would suggest that the Deputy submits a written question.

2.2.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

I thank the Minister for his wholehearted co-operation in answering my question and suggest that surely it must be possible to set a relative poverty level, all we have to do is update the figures from the last income distribution survey, and is he prepared to do that?

Senator P.F. Routier:

The information we have been given is that updating the old income distribution survey is not appropriate because people's buying patterns and their styles of living has changed since the last one. It is appropriate, I believe, to wait for the Statistics Unit to give a very valid and full new income distribution survey which we can work on with certainty.

2.2.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is it not the case that the report of the Scrutiny Panel into income support suggested there would be no or very little impact upon families, couples with children?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I honestly cannot recall what was in the report, Sir.