

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 15th JANUARY 2008

Question

1. How many, and what proportion of, applicants for Income Support (which commences on 28th January 2008) had received their assessment letters by Monday 7th January 2008 and how many have received them to date?

Answer

As of 7th January 2008, 7,309 application forms for Income Support had been received in the Department. By that date 5,624 claims (77%) had been rated and Award Notices issued to customers. Since then a further 415 application forms have been received bringing the total number of claims to 7,724. As of 13th January 2008 a further 1,256 claims had been rated (89% of all claims received).

Question

2. How many enquiries by telephone, e-mail or in person have the department had to deal with since the first letters were sent?

Answer

Since the dispatch of Award Notices began, the Department has received 4,674 phone calls and there have been 3,888 face to face contacts in the Front Office enquiring about Income Support. Email enquiries have been relatively low with 52 customers emailing the Department to enquire about their Income Support claims.

Question

3. Will the Minister undertake to consult with the Plain English Society to ensure that future communications from the department are written in language which can be clearly understood by recipients?

Answer

All standard Income Support letters are prepared by the Department in close co-operation with the States Communications Unit. The Communications Unit has published a comprehensive set of Editorial Guidelines, which have been approved by the Plain English Campaign and have been awarded the Crystal Mark. All standard Income Support letters are produced in line with these guidelines.

All letters are very carefully written to ensure that they provide the correct legal information required by the claimant. Income Support is a major change to the social benefits system and the department has had very many enquiries about it, but the language used in the letters has not featured as an issue in these enquiries.

Once the Income Support scheme is in operation, the emphasis will be on face-to-face interviews between trained advisers and claimants.

Question

4. Will the Minister clarify what Income Support arrangements are now in place with each of the parishes, and in particular what service level agreements have been signed, and when? Will he also assure members that no parish staff will be involved with Income Support administration unless and until such agreements

have been signed?

Answer

Departmental officers are in daily contact with the 11 parishes that will assist claimants with certain aspects of their Income Support benefit.

I shall be signing an agreement with the Comité before the implementation of Income Support. This will cover:

- 1 Provision of cash Income Support payments to parishioners
- 2 Administration of existing residential care claimants
- 3 Use of Parish Hall premises for Social Security staff to interview Income Support claimants
- 4 Facilities for emergency and out-of-hours payments by parish officials
- 5 Provision of general Income Support information and literature.

This agreement will be fully compliant with data protection legislation.