

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 19th JANUARY 2010**

Question

Will the Minister inform members what arrangements, if any, are in place under the new Income Support scheme to replace Family Allowance which was previously available to parents with less than 5 years' residency?

Answer

The Income Support system has replaced Family Allowance. Income Support provides financial assistance to families and includes a child component for each child under school leaving age in an Income Support household.

The structure of the Income Support system was set out in P.86/2005 – Income Support System. That proposition clearly stated that there would be a five year residency requirement in order to qualify for Income Support benefits. Previous benefits had a wide range of residency conditions, both above and below 5 years. The report stated:

“The Committee proposes that claimants for Income Support should be both resident and present in Jersey for 5 years prior to the claim. Most countries have a time requirement for access to income support systems. The existing Welfare system in Jersey stipulates 5 years. Most taking part in the consultation process thought this to be a reasonable starting point for qualification in the new system. Some, however, would like to see that period reduced when it could be afforded.”

More recently, following comments in SR.5/2009 – Review of Income Support – on the residency condition, I included the following comment in my response:

“The length of residency needed in order to qualify for Income Support was a major topic of discussion in the consultation leading up to the introduction of Income Support. This was agreed by the States and is a significant reduction from the 12 year period that previously applied to the Housing subsidy schemes. This will undoubtedly again feature in the review in 2010. It would be very expensive to reduce the five-year eligibility period – A reduction would require substantial increased funding or a reduction in the overall level of Income Support to all claimants.”

The Income Support review that will commence in 2010 will include a consideration of the residency qualification for Income Support.

Support for childcare costs is available through a separate scheme, available to parents who were resident in Jersey at the time of the birth of their child but have not been resident for five years and who are working in Jersey. Since September 2009 the Education, Sport and Culture Department has also provided 20 hours free nursery education, for 38 weeks per year, to children aged 3 to 4.