

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 23rd FEBRUARY 2010**

Question

Will the Minister inform members whether his department has started to systematically review all Income Support (IS) claims and if so:

- (a) when this review started;
- (b) how many reviews are undertaken per week;
- (c) how many have been completed this year to date, and
- (d) how many are targeted for review by 1st October 2010?

Would the Minister advise whether those on Transition Protection (TP) are included, and if so how many TP households fall into (b) to (d) above and how many of those on TP have already had their claims reviewed as a result of a change of circumstances?

As a result, how many households have had their benefit rate:

- (i) increased;
- (ii) maintained;
- (iii) reduced?

How many in (iii) have lost weekly amounts of less than £29; between £30 to £59; £60 to £89 and over £90 respectively?

Will the Minister state whether the phasing in the Income Support (Transitional Provisions) (Jersey) Order 2008 has been applied to these reductions and, in the light of the answers to (d) and (iii) above, will he state how many of the 3,700 households on TP will remain in the IS scheme to have this phased protection applied?

Answer

Income Support reviews can be initiated by the claimant informing the Department of a change in their circumstances or by the Department undertaking a periodic review of the claim. There have been ongoing reviews of Income Support (IS) claims since the inception of the scheme on 28th January 2008. There is some variation but on average 140 reviews are completed each week. Just over 800 reviews were undertaken between 4th January 2010 and 19th February 2010 and the Department is planning to complete approximately 5500 claim reviews in the nine months to 1st October 2010.

The Deputy refers to a figure of 3,700 transition households. As set out in my answer to his written question (4350) tabled on 28th April 2009 there were 2,734 transition claims in March 2009. As anticipated the number of households requiring transition protection has decreased steadily since the beginning of IS and it is likely that this reduction will continue in the future.

The average of 140 reviews per week includes transition claims. All transition claims will have been reviewed by 1st October 2010.

The table below provides an analysis of the changes in benefit rate for the majority of IS claims. In order to provide a sensible comparison, the figures relate to all claims that were already open on 4th November 2009 and remained open on 2nd February 2010 (i.e. claims recently opened and recently closed are not included). This comprises 7,057 claims. These figures do not include individuals receiving residential care.

Table - Changes in total weekly payment (including transition payments where appropriate)

Change in total weekly payment	Number of claims
Reduced by £90.00 or more	118
Reduced by £60.00 - £89.99	58
Reduced by £30.00 - £59.99	79
Reduced by £0.01 - £29.99	138
No change in benefit	6,049
Increased by £0.01 - £29.99	291
Increased by £30.00 - £59.99	113
Increased by £60.00 - £89.99	56
Increased by £90.00 or more	155

The table shows changes to benefit rates. IS benefit payments can range from a few pounds to hundreds of pounds per week. There are many reasons why IS increases or decreases in value as a result of a change in circumstances such as changes in members of a household unit, births, deaths, changes in income or accommodation.

I can confirm that the phasing included in the Income Support (Transitional Provisions) (Jersey) Order 2008 has not yet been applied because households currently in receipt of IS transition are all still receiving 100% protection of their legacy benefits, where they continue to be entitled to the legacy benefit. This will be maintained for those who continue to qualify until the first down rate in October 2010 as set out in the Transition Order.

Many households no longer require transition protection because their IS entitlement has increased and now exceeds the value of the protected payment. In other cases family circumstances have changed and the underlying legacy benefit is no longer applicable.

One example of a situation that would result in the withdrawal of protection is a transitional payment in respect of Family Allowance. Under the previous system when a child reached the age of eighteen Family Allowance ended in respect of that child. In the same way transitional protection is subject to the same rule and is withdrawn when the child reaches the age of eighteen.