

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 1st NOVEMBER 2011**

Question

Will the Minister advise whether he will implement recommendation 7 of the Scrutiny Report SR.3/2011 into benefit levels (that a full breakdown in terms of individual components of the total paid through Income Support (IS) be made public in the Annual Report and Accounts) and, if not, why?

Does the Minister accept that the absence of any published analysis of £95 million of benefit expenditure is contrary to the Council of Minister's commitment to open and accountable government?

Will he agree to the publication of a breakdown of the sums that have been dispensed on individual components of IS and, if so, when will he do so?

Will he agree to bring to the Assembly a report containing an analysis of the proportions of IS households which support claimants who are working or unemployed, pensioners, have children and live in States rental or private rental accommodation and, if so, when?

Does the Minister have any figures which reveal changes in the sums delivered by component or types of household over the period that IS has been in place and, if not, what analysis will be undertaken to address priorities for social support systems for the future?

Answer

As I advised in my response to the Scrutiny Report S.R. 3/2011 -Review of Benefit Levels, this topic is covered by the Income Support departmental review and further detail will be provided when this review is complete. For ease of reference the relevant extract from the response to the report is reproduced below:

| | Panel Finding / Recommendation | Response from Minister |
|------|--|---|
| F.9 | Key Finding 9 (Page 71) There is clearly a need to make public a regular report schedule on Income Support, including the cost of each component. | This topic is covered by the departmental review and further detail will be provided when the departmental review is complete. Income Support claimants do not receive their benefits in the form of individual components. They receive a variable amount of money, calculated as a balance between the household income and their maximum Income Support entitlement. There are a number of different ways in which the "cost" of a specific component could be presented. |
| R.7 | Recommendation 7 (Page 71) The Minister for Social Security must publish the cost of each component of Income Support in his Department Annual Report and Accounts. | |
| F.12 | Key Finding 12 (Page 80) Accurate figures for the sums which are paid to the States Housing Department and to private landlords are essential for the development of future housing policy. | It may be more useful to publish information based on the type of household receiving the benefit, for example, the total value of Income Support paid to pensioners. This would be a far less ambiguous calculation, which could be compared from year to year. |
| R.10 | Recommendation 10 (Page 80) The Sub-Panel recommends that the Minister for Social Security makes public accurate figures of gross annual payments of the accommodation components of Income Support. | These options are being considered as part of the departmental review. |

The Income Support review is underway and I would expect the new Minister to liaise with the Scrutiny Panel to decide on the most appropriate way of providing this information.