

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY SENATOR F. du H. LE GRESLEY
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 15th FEBRUARY 2011**

Question

Would the Minister provide a breakdown of the 1400 pensioner aged 65 plus households which claimed the GST Food Costs Bonus in 2010 by the following household type:-

- (a) pensioners who live alone
- (b) couples-one pensioner
- (c) couples- both pensioners?

Would the Minister provide details of actual expenditure in 2010 against budget for the GST Food Costs Bonus and for Income Support Special Payments-Cold Weather Payments and the budget figures for each benefit for 2011?

Answer

The figure of 1,400 quoted by Senator Le Gresley comes from an initial estimate of approximately 1,050 to 1,400 pensioner households. After detailed analysis the actual number is 979.

The table below provides a breakdown of 2010 Food Costs Bonus claims by pensioners in household type:

Household Type	Number of claims
Pensioners who live alone	547
Couples - one pensioner	68
Couples - both pensioner	364
Total	979

In respect of Food Costs Bonus and Income Support Cold Weather payments, the budget and spend are as follows:

2010

	Budget (£)	Actual Spend (£)
GST Food Costs Bonus	800,000	205,784
Income Support Cold Weather Payments	750,400	628,669

Please note that the spend figures quoted for 2010 are subject to audit.

2011

	Budget (£)
Food Costs Bonus	385,633
Income Support Cold Weather Payments	727,750

Removal of the Food Costs Bonus was submitted as a savings proposal as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review process for 2011. This proposal was subsequently amended twice resulting in the retention of the bonus with a revised budget reflecting current spend. However, as a result of recent close working with the Income Tax Department and analysis of the Income Distribution Survey data, the number of over 65's claiming the Food Costs Bonus currently is approximately one third of the potential claimants in this age group. The current budget reflects the possibility of some increased take up with an additional £75,000 as a result of the increase in GST from June. If all eligible households did claim the current budget would be insufficient.