

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY  
BY THE DEPUTY OF ST. JOHN  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 1st DECEMBER 2015**

**Question**

In answer to question 1240/5(9053) on 17th November 2015, the Minister provided links to a number of reports used to measure the success of the Income Support system. Could the Minister advise how these reports were used to determine recent measures in the Medium Term Financial Plan and in Orders made by the Minister and detail how those measures contribute to alleviating relative poverty in the Island?

**Answer**

In my answer to question 9053 I provided links to the Social Security Department's annual reports. These documents, which contain extensive detail about the operation of all Social Security benefits, including Income Support, are designed to be accessible to the layperson - with the aim of encouraging wide public scrutiny of the benefit system. Our commitment to financial and operational transparency performs an essential role in letting the public understand how tax-funded expenditure is planned, and how it is then targeted to those households most in need of support. The detail included as part of these reports demonstrates, at a high level, that my Department is prudent with its budget, but also shows that even the smallest parts of the benefit system are considered as part of our forward planning. For example, by analysing Income Support into its constituent elements and charting expenditure on different groups, the reports demonstrate how we keep all aspects of the Income Support system under review.

Through this thorough understanding of the operation of the benefit system, we were able to propose measures that keep tax funded benefit expenditure more or less flat over the period of the Medium Term Financial Plan, whilst minimising the impact on the majority of claimant households. Some of these measures were adopted as a consequence of the debates surrounding the Medium Term Financial Plan, some were made subsequently by Order. In each case, the measures were supported by material that explained our decisions within the overall context of the information provided as part of the annual reports. Steps were also taken to improve the fairness of the benefit system, which involved increasing payments to some groups whilst removing additional payments that were previously available to others.

The Council of Ministers is firmly committed to promoting social inclusion and addressing relative low income. In approving the Medium Term Financial Plan, the States agreed to prioritise the need to support growth in health and education budgets, and reaffirmed a longstanding policy to support economic growth. These are the essential drivers to improve the life chances of all households in Jersey.