

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY J.M. MAÇON OF ST. SAVIOUR
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 23rd FEBRUARY 2016**

Question

- (a) Is there a backlog in the processing of Impairment Forms within the department and, if so, why?
- (b) If there is a backlog, when will this be resolved and what action is being taken to deal with this issue?
- (c) How many people are currently affected by the backlog?
- (d) How is the department going to prevent backlogs from happening in future?

Answer

Income Support is designed to meet a variety of household needs, and from the introduction of the scheme it has always been recognised that the assessment of impairment should be undertaken separately to the processing of the remainder of the claim.

The broad range of medical and health needs supported by impairment components are considered through a separate application and assessment process. The staff who process these claims are experienced advisers who receive additional training and the assessment process considers both information provided directly by the claimant and evidence from GPs and/or relevant specialists.

In most cases, the main Income Support claim will be put into payment before the impairment process is complete. The impairment payments are then backdated to the start of the claim as soon as the impairment assessment is completed. This does not constitute a backlog. It allows for the efficient handling of the different parts of the claim. We also have procedures to ensure that urgent impairment cases can be prioritised.

The impairment test is designed to be transparent, the questions are clearly linked to the legislation and the assessment considers the evidence provided by the claimant themselves through a self-reporting form and a clinical report from an appropriate expert.

Income Support impairment components are available to assist with costs as follows:

- personal care components (three levels) provide additional support for individuals who have difficulty undertaking basic daily activities;
- mobility components (two levels) provide support for those who have significant mobility problems outside the home; and
- clinical cost components (two levels) provide additional support for those who need a higher than average number of GP visits to monitor an ongoing medical condition.

Individuals can be eligible for one or more components depending on their particular condition.

The departmental annual report for 2014 noted that, as of 31 December 2014, 34% of claims (2,185 claims in total) had at least one impairment component in payment.

During 2015, 483 new claims included a request for an impairment component. As noted above the impairment process is undertaken separately to the main Income Support application and will almost always take longer than the main claim.

The Social Security Business plan for 2016 includes a commitment to continue the development of our customer service excellence programme and officers are continually working to improve the service they provide. In respect of impairment components another round of staff training has recently been completed to provide more staff available to work in this area. Managers are also currently in negotiations with clinical professionals as part of a review of the technical support available to the team.