

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY  
BY DEPUTY C.S. ALVES OF ST. HELIER  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 6th NOVEMBER 2018**

**Question**

What safeguards, if any, are in place when imposing sanctions under the Income Support system, for example when removing the adult component for 13 weeks for those who have left employment?

**Answer**

In situations where a sanction might affect other vulnerable people in the household, such as very young children, the facility exists for the Minister to make a discretionary payment so that some support is maintained to the household.

For jobseekers a key safeguard built into the sanction system is that a person will receive first verbal and then a written warning to warn them if they risk getting a financial penalty. This means that a person who is sanctioned must have repeatedly ignored warnings from their employment advisor. Most people who get a written warning change their behaviour and avoid a financial penalty. In other cases, an individual may have taken the decision to leave a job without thinking about how this would affect their ability to rely on the benefit system for support. Most people who leave work either discuss their situation with Income Support beforehand or leave work through no fault of their own. These people aren't financially penalised.

Anybody who receives a financial sanction from Income Support receives a letter that describes the effect of the sanction and explains the reasons why they were given it. They have the right to supply evidence to show that the sanction was wrongly applied and to request a second decision from a different officer. If they disagree with this second decision they have the right to appeal to an independent tribunal.

When an officer is required to sanction somebody the decision is never taken lightly. The work of the determining officers and the sanction process itself are regularly reviewed to make sure sanctions are applied fairly, consistently and, for jobseekers, only as a last resort when verbal and written warnings have failed. The sanction process is subject to quality control by a senior member of staff and extenuating circumstances are always considered.

There are specific checks and balances used within the Department to make sure that vulnerable people are identified, and where appropriate referred to another agency as an alternative to a financial penalty. In the very small minority of claims where the sanction could lead to a loss of all Income Support, a background report is produced and submitted to an internal safeguarding panel. This report will look at the needs of any children or vulnerable adults, and consider whether another agency should be involved before the claim is closed.

Details of the Income Support sanction process are included on the gov.je web site - <https://www.gov.je/Benefits/IncomeSupport/Pages/IncomeSupportSanctions.aspx>