

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY M.R. SCOTT OF ST. BRELADE
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 28th NOVEMBER 2022
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 5th DECEMBER 2022**

Question

“Given the existence of members of the public on a lower income who may not have access to the internet (and who may not be able to afford to purchase local newspapers), will the Minister provide information regarding any Government strategies that exist either to collect and access data on, or to make direct contact with, such members of the public in order that they are notified of, and assisted in applying for, any Government benefits such as the Community Cost Bonus to which they are entitled?”

Answer

Government undertakes several initiatives that aim to make contact with the group of Islanders that the Deputy refers to in her question.

In terms of the Community Costs Bonus itself; Government has run an extensive media campaign to make sure we are maximising reach to those Islanders who could qualify for the annual payment. The proactive campaign has been running since September and has included: notices in parish magazines, radio adverts (over two separate periods), social media, JEP print adverts as well as digital adverts online and in the St. Helier bus station. We have also circulated leaflets through our Community Partners, as well as Churches and Schools.

More generally, initiatives such as Connect Me and Closer to Home are targeted more widely than online or local media. Events have been held across the Island and are promoted via weekly community newsletters (which includes all Parishes) and a wide range of local Charities. This network includes organisations such as the Salvation Army, Caritas, the Grace Trust and Age Concern.

Closer to Home brings together Charities and Government Departments to provide information and advice on a wide range of subjects, with the next event planned for the 8th December focussing on the cost of living and winter pressures. It is our intention to hold a number of Closer to Home events across Parishes during 2023.

Connect Me was established during the covid-19 pandemic and provides support and signposting for Islanders on a diverse range of matters. Since its inception, it has supported over 700 Islanders. Furthermore, Connect Me is a key part of the Covid Social Recovery work which has recently supported over 40 projects across the Island to enable Islanders to access sports, heritage, art and culture.

In addition to these initiatives, Jersey Library offers free internet access to all members, both via desk top computers and via a public Wi-Fi system. Free introductory computer skills lessons are also available, as is access (at-cost) to International Computer Driving Licence training. It is free to join the Library, and there are currently over 30,000 members.

The Library also provides access to copies of the Jersey Evening Post, together with other UK publications. Library members can also access the online Press Reader service, which gives free access to thousands of newspapers from across the world, including a translation option.

The Library Service works closely with colleagues across the Government of Jersey to ensure members of the public can access information about Government public information campaigns and initiatives, recent examples are the Assisted Dying consultation and the upcoming Cervical Screening Awareness campaign.

It is also useful to note that the Jersey Evening Post is available, free of charge, from the Salvation Army, Age Concern and Stuart Court Residential Home.

Finally, Customer and Local Services also send out regular mailings to pensioners explaining what benefits they can access, via a flyer that goes with the annual pension statement, this covers all of the benefits that can be accessed from Community Cost Bonus and Cold Weather Bonus, Income Support through to the Pension Plus scheme. CLS also send out targeted mailings to customers who may be entitled to additional benefits to those currently accessed, and in addition provide information at ‘in person’ events across the Island, either directly with customer groups or via support groups and Charities. CLS also have officers with the tools to process claim applications at these events, should customers wish.