

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY G.S. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER CENTRAL
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON TUESDAY 11th APRIL 2023
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 18th APRIL 2023**

Question

Given the evidence from the recently published report on work undertaken in 2020 by the UK Department for Work and Pensions ([“The Impact of Benefit Sanctions on Employment Outcomes”](#)), which shows that the use of sanctions in the benefit system is ineffective in getting people into work, will the Minister provide any figures she has regarding the use of sanctions in the Jersey Income Support system, and advise what measures, if any, she has under consideration in response to these figures?

Answer

In line with many other international examples, the Jersey Income Support scheme includes rules around work conditionality as part of the eligibility test for receiving weekly Income Support payments. There is no direct relationship between the UK system and the Jersey system.

The report referenced in the question is a draft report prepared in 2020 and was published as a draft following a number of FOI request to the UK government. The UK government has also published a [note](#) to explain the context of the draft report and its publication. This should be read alongside the draft report itself.

A financial sanction on jobseekers in Jersey’s Income Support system is only used as a last resort. A financial sanction (temporary reduction in benefit level) is only applied if the jobseeker has already received a written warning for failing to do enough to look for work. This could be because they’ve failed to turn up for a meeting or job interview without a good reason, or because they are away from the Island when they should be looking for work. It is reasonable that there is the risk of a penalty if a jobseeker fails to take reasonable steps to find employment.

Most jobseekers in Jersey will have a relationship with a dedicated employment advisor, who they will meet and speak with regularly. Their search for employment is tailored to their abilities, with training and support where appropriate. Employment advisors will carefully consider any barriers that a person has in looking for work. Actively Seeking Work numbers are now at 610 (Q1 2023) – this is the lowest level since records began in 2011 and represents a continued fall in the number of people registered as looking for work. The figures for this quarter are 110 lower than they were a year ago.

In the Income Support system, the number of financial sanctions is low, and the number of jobseekers who successfully find employment is high. Overall, there were nearly 1800 people actively seeking work throughout 2022. Within this number there were just 70 breaches resulting in a financial penalty. In addition, 87 warnings were issued that did not result in a financial sanction. Those numbers will include some individuals who have received more than one warning/ breach. For example, each jobseeker who receives a breach 1 sanction will also previously have received a written warning.

Most people want to work and take up help from the Back to Work Team without the need for a financial penalty. This has been proven to be effective at getting people into work in Jersey. For the very small minority of jobseekers who don’t do enough to look for work (without good reason) it is appropriate and fair that they will risk a financial penalty for ignoring the rules of a benefit system funded by the taxpayer.

I have no plans to review the jobseeker rules under Income Support at present.