

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER CENTRAL
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 5th JUNE 2023
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 12th JUNE 2023**

Question

“Will the Minister advise to what extent, if any, the proposals outlined in Regulation 3 of the Draft Social Security (Amendment of Law No. 18) (Jersey) Regulations 202- ([P. 24/2023](#)), which would enable claimants of Short Term Incapacity Allowance to return to work while still claiming benefit, are similar to (or informed by) the ‘restart’ schemes operated by specialist agencies under guidance from the UK Department for Work and Pensions, which have reportedly been an expensive and inefficient means of getting people back into work (especially those with specialist health needs)?”

Answer

All States Members have been offered the opportunity to attend a presentation on the new Social Security Short Term Incapacity scheme. This will be delivered by the policy team developing the scheme and the Expert Medical Advisor who is supporting policy and operational development.

A private briefing on the details of the scheme has already been given to the Health and Social Security Scrutiny Panel. The briefing was positively received, and I am confident that we can meet all of the Panel’s comments on the new scheme.

I am very optimistic about the changes and believe they offer a new form of support to Jersey employees and their employers.

I can confirm that Jersey’s scheme is not similar to Restart and was not informed by it.

The two schemes have a different focus, address a different target group, and will be administered quite differently. What they have in common is that both seek to help people avoid or mitigate the impacts of health conditions on their ability to remain in work.

Restart is a scheme operated by the UK’s Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), which initially targeted support to Universal Credit claimants who had been out of work for nine months or more. It has subsequently been expanded in some areas of operation. This customer group would be described as “long-term unemployed” – the equivalent of some jobseekers on Income Support. Restart is operated across the United Kingdom by a range of external partners contracted by the DWP. This is understandable given the size of the UK, but has reportedly created difficulty for the DWP in benchmarking different partners against each other to determine effectiveness. It was also begun during the pandemic, which understandably made it challenging for the DWP to predict capacity. This has led to lower-than-expected uptake but it is not entirely accurate to say that the Restart schemes have been expensive and inefficient.¹

The changes made in Jersey will be available to all working-age people who pay into the Social Security Scheme. By definition, these will be people who are either in work or have recently been in work. My goal is to support people in managing common health conditions alongside the demands of working life. Expert advice strongly supports the concept of “work as a health outcome” and how it can benefit many people.

¹ <https://www.nao.org.uk/press-releases/restart-scheme-for-long-term-unemployed-people/>

Jersey's new scheme will be operated in-house by Customer and Local Services, by staff specially trained in vocational rehabilitation. A training model is being developed for Jersey that is similar to one used across the world by benefits agencies and healthcare professionals, but also GPs, unions and employers. We are planning for our service to offer a model of individual support and it will be completely optional to the individual. People who don't want extra support will not be obliged to take it up and the aim is for people to feel that they have been supported to take control of their own health management alongside work.

Jersey's scheme will at first target common health conditions, such as musculoskeletal problems and depression. Specialist health needs are likely to be considered at a later date, but only once a successful process has been established for people with common health conditions. A widening of scope would also be informed by discussion with health experts and Jersey's voluntary sector.

Jersey's current incapacity benefit rules are inflexible and can result in people leaving work permanently because there is no flexibility in supporting workers while they recover from a health condition. The legal changes and the new service are designed to address this barrier and are aimed at benefiting the health and wellbeing of individual workers as well as the Island's economy as a whole.