

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY  
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER CENTRAL  
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 28<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2022  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 5<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2022**

**Question**

“Further to the recent publicity stating that “severe mental stress” was caused to a benefit recipient resulting from the pursuit of an overpayment of benefit made in error by her Department, will the Minister detail what measures she has taken, or intends to take, to eliminate such errors in future; and will she specifically advise to what extent overpayments are caused by staffing pressures in the delivery of Income Support awards?”

**Answer**

All customers in receipt of Income Support are legally required to inform the department of any changes within their household which may affect their Income Support entitlement, at the earliest opportunity, to ensure their claim is paid at the correct rate.

Customers are informed of this when their Income Support claim is opened and receive ongoing notifications of this in letters sent from the department.

Anyone suffering from mental stress can be supported by a nominated person through an authority to disclose, this can be a person known to the claimant or an agent or advocate providing additional help.

The Income Support team can accept changes through a household member writing to, phoning or visiting the department, but we have also made it easy for customers to inform the department of changes in circumstances through simple online forms. Internal reports are also used to identify changes in earnings which have not been notified by the claimant, but these reports are retrospective and will only provide limited information on overall household income.

Income Support was supporting a high number of claims with an increase in unemployment caused by the pandemic, however, most changes to claims were actioned within 5 days during that time. The level of staffing in the department does not lead in itself to overpayments.

A claim is overpaid benefit when the information relating to a change in circumstances is not communicated to the department, which means a claimant then receives more money than they are entitled to. In these situations the department will seek to recover any overpayment caused by customers failing to inform the department of a change in circumstances.