



Deputy Elaine Millar
Minister for Social Security

BY EMAIL

13th November 2023

S.R.1/2023 – Income Support Benefits Overpayment

Dear Deputy Millar,

We refer to the States Assembly on the afternoon of Tuesday 17th October 2023, during the debate on the Audit of Government Department Vacancies (P.73/2023) in which you spoke.

The comments you made during your speech in that debate made reference to the recently published Health and Social Security Scrutiny Report [S.R.1/2023 – Income Support Benefits Overpayment](#) and the Scrutiny Liaison Committee believe your comments to be grossly unfair.

Your comments state that the people who work within the Customer and Local Services (CLS) would have been very upset from the contents of the report and suggest that the report portrays these employees as 'heartless, evil and callous'. This was an unfair and inaccurate characterisation of the contents of the Scrutiny report. Scrutiny is an evidence-based process and any comments that are used within the report, are formulated from factual evidence received and do not in any way reflect the personal opinion of the Chair or any members of the Panel. In addition, the report has yet to receive a formal Ministerial Response and we are extremely disappointed that these are the first comments publicly made.

We would like to refer you to page 52 of the report regarding communication with officers as positive and are disappointed that you did not choose to make reference to these quotes being included within the report. Page 52 of the report states that:

The Panel acknowledges that when undertaking a review of this nature it is more likely to receive negative feedback than positive and therefore, in this instance, the evidence received isn't necessarily a reflection on the majority of staff who work within Income Support. Having said that, the Panel did hear from a number of stakeholders who provided encouraging feedback about their experiences with CLS staff:

To date, the contact we have had with Social Security team has been good and they have been understanding and helpful.

We have fostered good relationships with colleagues within social security and are generally able to make contact and discuss issues, concerns, feedback with officers directly, whether that be on behalf of clients or supporting them to attend meetings or have conversations themselves.

We would also like to note that the debate in which you spoke was not connected in any way to the Scrutiny report and again, we are disappointed that you chose this platform in which to make negative comments towards a Chair of a Scrutiny Panel and a Scrutiny Panel's fact-based report.

Yours sincerely,



Deputy Sam Mézec
President, Scrutiny Liaison Committee