

STATES OF JERSEY



ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2009 (P.113/2008): AMENDMENT

Lodged au Greffe on 29th August 2008
by Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier

STATES GREFFE

PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (a) –

In paragraph (a)(vi) after the words “pages 24 to 25” insert the words –

“except that after success criteria (iv) in Objective 4 on page 25 there shall be inserted the following success criteria –

‘(v) Minimum service level agreement for processing a change of circumstances relating to the accommodation component of Income Support established.’ ”.

DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

Currently the Housing Department does not appear to have any minimum service level targets for processing Income Support claims with regard to the accommodation component following routine changes to the circumstances of tenants. When this change involves an increase in the tenant's income (a return to work or promotion) then the tenant will be in receipt of IS to which he or she is not entitled whilst the Department processes the new application. During this period the tenant will accrue rent arrears.

This period of time can be several weeks, and on one occasion last year the Department admitted that it was responsible for two separate delays on the rent account of a tenant totalling 24 weeks, during which time the tenant accrued rent arrears of over £2,000. This was through no fault of the tenant and despite her repeated attempts to get the application dealt with.

The acquisition of even small levels of rent arrears by those reliant on Income Support does cause distress and is to be avoided if possible. It requires the setting up of an agreement to repay the arrears out of income which is already low, and this may cause financial difficulties. In the absence of clear, agreed and public service level targets for these routine administrative matters, it is difficult to see how the terms of Objective 5 (iii) – *Drive efficiency through setting individual and team efficiency targets* – can be met.

It should surely be reasonable to expect the department to acknowledge the receipt of the application within 5 working days and that the new assessment would be completed within, say, 15 working days. Such a target should be agreed and put in place so that undue delays can be targeted and eliminated.

I believe that this change can be implemented within existing resources and I do not therefore consider that there are any additional manpower or financial implications.