

22.12.12

**3 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of the Chief Minister regarding Government action on growing inequality (OQ.136/2022)**

Following the results of the latest Opinions and Lifestyle Survey from Statistics Jersey, which showed a growing number of Islanders reporting that they are “struggling to cope financially”, will the Chief Minister outline what action the Government will take to tackle the root causes of growing inequality?

**Deputy K.L. Moore (The Chief Minister):**

Thank you, Deputy, for the question. The survey results published last week indicate that 24 per cent of households identified themselves as finding it either very difficult or quite difficult to cope financially. Over the past 12 years responses to that question have varied from a slightly higher figure of 26 per cent in 2014 and a lower figure of 18 per cent in 2017. Although there is no specific trend over this period we can see that between a fifth to a quarter of those surveyed describe their situation in those categories. Last week also saw the publication of an analysis of indicators of material deprivation, which showed encouraging progress in the past decade.

[14:15]

Indicators associated with material deprivation decreased in important areas such as overcrowding, unemployment, lack of educational qualifications and unskilled work. That being said, my Government wants Jersey to be a place where everyone can thrive. We will continue to address these key areas to help to achieve a good quality of life for all Islanders. As Members will be aware, the first 2 of our common strategic priorities relate to housing and economy and skills in particular, and we have already put more money into people’s pockets by agreeing the package of measures that was agreed in our mini-Budget back in September. We have also increased the minimum wage. We are increasing the supply of affordable homes and the quality of private sector accommodation. We are developing a well-skilled workforce within a sustainable economic framework, supporting family friend policies and support for families in particular through early intervention. We are also investing in education and skills. These actions will help to further reduce material deprivation and tackle the root causes of inequality and help all Members of our community to thrive.

**4.3.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

I slightly disagree with where the Chief Minister went towards the end of that. Raising the minimum wage clearly does address part of the root causes of growing inequality but not all the other ones she raised did do that, including increasing benefits, which is addressing the symptom rather than the cause of poverty. Could I provide the Chief Minister with a further opportunity to outline some other tangible actions which she will seek to take, which truly do address the root causes of growing inequality and not simply address the symptoms, which can well be a good thing to do in difficult times but in terms of the long-term desire to see reduction in inequality do not quite do it.

**Deputy K.L. Moore:**

Perhaps I was not clear enough in my response but I did talk about our commitment to improving education and skills, which are exactly areas that address those root causes by increasing the skillset of members of our community and enhancing their opportunities to work and to thrive. Also, we are most certainly committed to investing in the early years in family friendly policies, and policies that help to break the cycles of deprivation by working with families, providing them with sustained support that enables them to enhance their way of life and to improve their own circumstances.