

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY BY  
DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER**

**ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 21st OCTOBER 2008**

**Question**

Will the Minister inform members whether Income Support applicants who notify the department of a change of circumstances promptly on finding or returning to work and thereby increasing their income, are routinely charged for an “overpayment” of benefit for the time taken to establish their new level of benefit?

Can he further state whether in such circumstances the Department may insist on the repayment of this “overpayment” within 6 months, leading to weekly repayments of £12 on an overpayment of £300, and if so, will he inform members what actions, if any, he is prepared to take to rectify the situation to avoid pushing families further into poverty?

**Answer**

No, there are no routine charges for “overpayment” as suggested by the question. However, if an income support claimant fails to notify the department of a change of circumstance that would lead to a reduction in benefit, then the department has the legal right to recover the overpayment that has been made.

If an overpayment is to be recovered, weekly repayments over an extended timeframe will be agreed with the claimant. The purpose of the weekly repayments is to correct an overpayment which occurred because the claimant received too much benefit for a period of time as a result of the failure to inform the Department that the household income had **increased**. There is no suggestion that a family in this situation would be “pushed further into poverty”.

If the claimant informs the Department of the change at the time, then no repayment is required.