

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHIEF MINISTER
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER CENTRAL
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 17th OCTOBER 2022
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 24th OCTOBER 2022**

Question

“Will the Chief Minister –

- (a) explain why the goal of reducing income inequality was not explicitly included in the proposed Common Strategic Policy;
- (b) state whether this aim will nevertheless be treated as a basis for policy work and, if not, explain why not; and
- (c) advise whether, as part of any such policy work, the Government is considering an extension to the Health Access Scheme to cover further groups, by age or disability, in order to reduce health inequality and, if not, explain why not?”

Answer

The shared ambition of Ministers is for Jersey to be a place where everyone can thrive.

The Common Strategic Policy identifies seven interlinked priorities designed to ensure Ministers focus and take decisions that have regard to Jersey as a place to live, a place of work, a place to grow old with dignity, and a place to take pride in and protect. The seven priorities for change are –

- housing and cost of living
- economy and skills
- children and families
- ageing population
- health and well-being
- environment
- community

While, of course, income inequality is one of the measures we will monitor, our focus is to encourage a prosperous and sustainable economy which supports long- and real-terms income and earnings growth; and to provide more support to improve quality and standard of life, especially during this once-in-a-generation cost of living crisis.

This requires a range of careful, costed, and sustainable measures.

Our actions in this respect are already clear – including by increasing the minimum wage to £10.50 per hour and giving targeted support to Islanders in the mini-budget. We are also developing measures that will give direct help, such as with sanitary products and school meals, recognising that almost all of us are impacted by inflation.

A specific policy objective around income inequality as a distributional measure would require a narrow focus on changes to household income across the income spectrum (and which could wrongly be achieved by reducing the incomes those at the higher or even middle end of the scale).

The Health Access Scheme also serves as a useful example of a targeted, effective scheme to support vulnerable groups that has no impact on income inequality.

The introduction of the Health Access Scheme provides subsidised GP services to adults and free GP surgery visits for low-income children. This ensures that parents can take children to get medical advice promptly, reducing possible anxiety among parents and supporting early intervention and positive health outcomes for children, minimising the impact of ill health on their schooling and general development. In this way, the Health Access Scheme acts to improve the wellbeing of local families. However, the existence of the Health Access Scheme is not registered or recorded in any measure of income inequality.

It should be noted, as previously confirmed, that the Minister for Social Security in her ministerial plan for 2023 has confirmed that there will be a review of the operation of HAS in 2023.