

Overpayment of Income Support Benefits – Submission from Anonymous 14

I am just emailing you the full details of my issues between Student Finance and Income Support that we spoke about this Tuesday.

As of September 2020, myself and my brother [REDACTED] began University. Our first issue when we started university was how income support for our family was counted as our 'household income'. This was frustrating because if income support is there to support our family because we need it to make ends meet then why should this be added as an extra income that our family is making when it is there as a lifeline? Therefore if the states are adding this as income then it clearly seems to show that from the state's point of view is that this is money that my family can use to support our maintenance. But this is further confusing when we are off island we are off the claim and my parents are receiving less support as a result so why would this be translated for my student finance as income when clearly is not there to support me? This needs to be broken done further and communicated better because this seems unfair and illogical how that states are approaching welfare and student maintenance.

Another issue arose concerning my brother [REDACTED] when there had been confusion about his return dates to university between September and December 2021. There had been confusion about his return dates for university; leading to my brother staying on the claim. This resulted in Social Services coming back to my parents demanding returning the income for [REDACTED]. This is very frustrating as when we began university it was never laid out by Social Services what we had to do in regard to our family being on the claim and going to university. this was left for our family to figure out.

This issue is more frustrating in regard to my brother always stating that he was returning back to university to complete his second year of university and never declared any desire to stay or take time out. The means of us students having to send screenshots and our tickets directly to Social services to 'prove our return' seems to be primitive means of maintaining when we are on the claim. When some families may be less fortunate than us where home is more complicated where this information is not known, harder to get across, and could lead to more harmful consequences.

To conclude with our issues, it is clear that Student Finance and Income Support need to have an integrated communique, at least. As mentioned before with other struggling families it is deplorable to think that when students from Jersey go to university their families are not signposted a letter/email of what this means for their Student Finance and vice versa. It makes no sense that students who have done all the needed paperwork for Student Finance a government institution that is already in touch with other departments are somehow isolated from income support. Leading to the case of my brother.

If both institutions were integrated it would mean that when families who fill out the Student Finance who are Income Support it should be communicated to them the process of what this will mean for their Income Support claim. Secondly, this will remove a larger portion of any mishaps like my brother if students are confirmed to be going back to university it will be known by Student Finance because it will be filled out by the HE2 form and would aid any issue with overpayments. Clearly, if this was introduced it would save Social services and families any wasted time of state priorities and more importantly not lead to families having more grief and being threatened with more loss of income.

I thank you for you taking the time to read my email, of course, I understand you cannot promise anything but it would be much appreciated if there was at least a conversation between politicians and the civil service on this matter.