

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY R.J. WARD OF ST. HELIER CENTRAL
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 4th DECEMBER 2023
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 11th DECEMBER 2023**

Question

“Will the Minister advise what Departmental assistance, if any, is available to pursue unpaid child maintenance payments from separated parents no longer living in the household, and explain how these unpaid payments are taken into account by the Department when calculating Income Support levels for single parents?”

Answer

The Department does not assist in the recovery of maintenance but will advise the customer to seek support from agencies such as Citizens Advice Jersey or Family Mediation Jersey. It is not the role of Government to pursue maintenance payments through the courts and attempts to do so could be highly controversial, as shown by experience in other jurisdictions. Where one party does not make payments due under a formal maintenance agreement it is possible for the other parent to take them to the Petty Debts Court.

In cases where a person claims Income Support and there is no maintenance received in respect of a child, officers will ask them to make reasonable efforts to secure maintenance. If the parent does not make reasonable efforts to secure maintenance, it is possible to add a “notional income” on their claim, meaning that the parent is treated as if they did have this income. This happens in only 2% of cases.

If the single parent demonstrates that they have made reasonable efforts and are unable to get maintenance from an ex-partner, this will not have any negative effect on their entitlement to benefit. No notional income is added, and they will receive the full entitlement to Income Support.