

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY  
BY THE DEPUTY OF ST. JOHN  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 4TH JULY 2017**

**Question**

Could the Minister advise how many current or former Income Support claimants are currently required to pay back funds due to overpayment? How many of these people receive in-work Income Support compared to the number not in work?

**Answer**

The Department is currently refining the methodology used to extract statistics in respect of the number and type of overpayments within the Income Support system. This work will be complete in the next few months and at that time data will be available on the breakdown of overpayments by type of claim. This project does not affect the administration of individual claims and overpayments continue to be agreed with claimants and repaid on a weekly basis.

The Department has invested heavily in improving the customer experience and the ability to deal with customer contact on a “right first time” basis, including an increase in staff capacity in customer facing areas, the introduction of online forms for benefit changes, and the allocation of key officer contacts for third party partner organisations. These improvements have led to a reduction in the time taken to process changes to existing benefits which are now often made within one working day, reducing overpayments.

The income support system makes payments in advance. This ensures that vulnerable claimants can be supported immediately without any “waiting period”. Moving to a system that made payments in arrears would reduce the number of overpayments but would also deny vulnerable claimants access to benefits at a time of need.