

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY  
BY DEPUTY C.S. ALVES OF ST. HELIER  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 9th MARCH 2020**

**Question**

Will the Minister –

- (a) advise whether information dating back to 2014 is currently being requested when Income Support claims are reviewed;
- (b) if that is the case, state why and explain whether this process includes asking questions that were answered at the time that the claims in question were set up; and
- (c) explain what, if anything, is being done to prevent those people for whom there may be errors in the claim that is being reviewed, but through no fault of their own, from falling into poverty whilst Customer and Local Services awaits the requested information and their claims are suspended?

**Answer**

Income Support is designed to make regular adjustments to claims to ensure that households are getting the right level of benefit payments. This process requires supporting information to ensure any adjustments are accurate. In most cases the information requested is current information, proving a household's current income and other important factors such as up-to-date rent or household composition. It is not standard practice for information to be requested in 2020 for the periods as long as ago as 2014, because one of the conditions of Income Support is that households are legally obliged to provide current information and notify Income Support immediately of any change of circumstances.

Determining Officers have the power to request older information if it is necessary to ensure the accuracy of a claim. This could be for several reasons but one of these is the investigation of potential fraud. The obligation is always on the claimant to provide good, accurate information when claiming Income Support, and if officers think this may not be the case they are required to investigate errors as far back as is needed.

Income Support literature is, and always has been, very clear that the obligation is on the claimant to ensure that information supplied is accurate and up to date. Anybody who fails to do this might be overpaid benefit which must be paid back, and leaves themselves liable to criminal prosecution.

When a determining officer adjusts a claim, this may involve the temporary withholding of payments to ensure that a household is not overpaid. Before any payment is withheld it will be reviewed for possible safeguarding concerns. Where these exist, further investigations will be completed.

Wherever possible this will be dealt with as quickly as possible, but the consequences of supplying incorrect information may include the possibility that benefit is not paid during periods where a claim is being investigated for possible fraud.