

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY BY
DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 20th JANUARY 2009

Question

In the light of the critical report recently delivered on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Income Support system, will the Minister now agree to a full and comprehensive review of the 'fitness for purpose' of Income Support this year, as previously proposed, paying particular attention to incentives to work and save; access to GP's; prompt access and greater flexibility over special payments, and the issue of community visitors to protect the vulnerable, and if not, why?

Answer

The income support system is still very new and procedures and guidelines are kept under close review on an ongoing basis. For example, I will be reviewing and reissuing the main Income Support policy guidelines within the next few weeks.

Following the leaking of the draft Parish of St. Helier report to the local media, I have asked to meet the Constable of St Helier to discuss any concerns he may have in more detail. My Assistant Minister has already undertaken several visits to other parishes to gauge their experiences of Income Support.

There are ongoing issues of the provision of community care to vulnerable residents in Jersey. This situation is not directly related to Income Support and resources in this area have been stretched for several years. I will be working with the Health & Social Services and Housing Ministers and the Chairman of the Constables' Committee to ensure that vulnerable residents are identified and provided with appropriate support.

Undertaking a full and comprehensive review of Income Support in 2009 would divert resources from the work to be undertaken on community support and, as highlighted in the debate on P.113/7, a review at this early stage runs the danger of being an unsatisfactory exercise, in that it is very difficult to review the impact of any new system until it has been running in a finished state for some time.

I will review all the evidence provided by the Parish of St. Helier or from any other source, and if changes need to be made to the Income Support system, then I will not hesitate to make these changes. It is however equally as important that the system is allowed to bed down and that extra efforts are made to ensure that all vulnerable people are made aware of their entitlement to the current Income Support benefit.