

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

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 3rd FEBRUARY 2009

Question

In the light of the Minister's commitment to "working closely with scrutiny" (speech to members 11th December 2008) will the Minister assure the Assembly that he will co-operate with the Chairman of the Income Support Scrutiny Sub-Panel to establish a "like-for-like" comparison of benefit systems requested of his predecessor on 1st July 2008 and ,if so, will he undertake to do so in a timely manner so that the impact of the new system on claimants can be understood before the cuts in benefits take place in October of this year?

Answer

I can assure Members that I am fully committed to working with Scrutiny. I am appearing before the Scrutiny panel on Monday 2nd February to discuss the departmental business plan for 2009 and at officer level, I can confirm that a meeting has already been held and information requested and provided.

My predecessor gave a commitment to provide raw data to the Scrutiny panel in order for the "like-for-like" comparison of benefit systems to be undertaken. I can confirm that this data was provided to the panel's advisor last year. I will co-operate with the Chairman to provide any additional information the Panel may require in order for them to complete their investigations.

The question refers to "cuts in benefit" and I would like to reassure Members and Income Support claimants that there is no cut in Income Support benefit planned for October 2009. When Income Support was introduced, claimants were assessed under the Income Support benefit criteria. If the value of their Income Support benefit was greater than their previous benefit entitlement they transferred to Income Support at the new, higher rate from day one. If their previous entitlement was greater than their income support entitlement, then they received their income support benefit plus an additional sum (a "protected payment" or transitional benefit) so that their total benefit matched their previous benefit level.

These protected payment benefits have been paid at the full rate since the end of January 2008. They are funded separately from Income Support benefits and are designed to be withdrawn over a number of years. Additional funding provided in the 2009 Business Plan has extended the period of 100% protection until October 2009. The first reduction in protected payments will then take place. The rate at which the protection is reduced is shown in the table below and depends on the characteristics of the household at the date of the introduction of Income Support. The percentage reduction refers only to the value of the protected payment and not to the total amount of benefit received. Protected benefits will be fully withdrawn by October 2014.

Period	Household previously receiving a disability benefit*	Household with high legacy benefit	Household with high income	Household including someone aged 65 + or previously receiving DTA**	hc
From 1st October 2009 to 30th September 2010	100	80	0	75	

From 1st October 2010 to 30th September 2011	80	60	0	50	
From 1st October 2011 to 30th September 2012	60	40	0	25	
From 1st October 2012 to 30th September 2013	40	20	0	0	
From 1st October 2013 to 30th September 2014	20	0	0	0	

* Attendance Allowance, Adult Disablement Allowance, Child Disablement Allowance

** Disabled Transport Allowance