

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY  
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 20TH JUNE 2017**

**Question**

What assessment has the Minister made of the principal causes of social exclusion in Jersey and what measures, if any, does she have under consideration to reduce the number of children living in low-income households?

**Answer**

Social exclusion is a complex phenomenon that has no universally-agreed definition. The UK's Social Exclusion Unit (later to become the Social Exclusion Task Force) commissioned an independent academic study into social exclusion ("The Multi-dimensional Analysis of Social Exclusion<sup>1</sup>") which produced the following working definition:

*Social exclusion is a complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole.*

Living in a low-income household should not be automatically assumed to lead to social exclusion. Jersey is a fortunate society, where citizens are not commonly denied resources, rights, or the ability to purchase goods or services. Measures of social exclusion might then be related to an inability to participate in normal relationships or activities available to the majority of people in our society.

I am committed to helping low income families move towards financial independence and the evidence shows that our work here is producing results. The economy is growing and there are more people in work than at any time in Jersey's history. The Department's policies aim to help people increase their incomes to the point that they no longer need support from the benefit system. Changes to Income Support over the last few years have helped parents look for and take up work. There are fewer children living in workless households claiming Income Support than at any time in the last 5 years as shown in the Department's annual report for 2015 and reproduced below.

<b>Year</b>	<b>% of Working Age Households with No Earned Income</b>	<b>% of All Children in Working Age Households with No Earned Income</b>
2011	60%	39%
2012	58%	35%
2013	55%	35%
2014	52%	32%
2015	49%	28%

From a Social Security perspective, the best way to help children from a low-income household participate more fully in our society is doing everything we can to ensure that adults in that household are supported

<sup>1</sup>[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/social\\_exclusion\\_task\\_force/assets/research/multidimensional.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/social_exclusion_task_force/assets/research/multidimensional.pdf)

to work. Not only does this increase the income available to the household, there is strong evidence that work improves an adult's self-esteem, health and general wellbeing. As children will be to a large extent dependant on adults to facilitate their social participation, what is good for adults in their household is good for children also. We acknowledge this by investing in specialist Back to Work support for parents to re-enter the workforce, and increasing help with the costs of childcare. I've also proposed general increases to the components that make up Income Support, and will further increase the percentage of income that is ignored when calculating entitlement to Income Support – for employment and for maintenance from an ex-partner. This will offer the strongest incentive yet for adults in low-income households to work and help their families towards financial independence.

However, policies that address some of the issues associated with social exclusion are broader than those which directly relate to Income Support. In Jersey, long-term investments in our children have been made possible by joined-up working across multiple departments.

Investing in education will have an early and long-lasting effect in reducing social exclusion by reducing the attainment gap between low-income children and their higher income peers. The Jersey Premium system specifically targets financial resources towards children living in low-income households. The evidence from similar schemes in other jurisdictions shows that this educational premium will have a positive, long-term impact on social inclusion in our Island. In addition to this the Education Department's support for free nursery education ensures that children from low-income households are able to benefit from this extra social and developmental support before they start formal schooling.

Improving health services also helps to break down the barriers sometimes faced by socially excluded groups. Again, investments in early years and post-natal health were included in the Medium Term Financial Plan. The States is also committed to supporting the 1001 Days project, which supports children in the critical development period from conception to their second birthday.

Refurbishing and renewing the Island's social housing stock also provides low income families with a better quality physical environment in which to bring up children who are able to participate fully in their local community.