

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY R.J. WARD OF ST. HELIER
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 7th FEBRUARY 2022
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 14th FEBRUARY 2022**

Question

“Will the Minister advise what action, if any, is taken to track how many families with children, who are in receipt of Income Support, are accessing food banks; and are actions undertaken to assess, or track, whether those having repayments deducted from their Income Support are at greater risk of accessing food banks?”

Answer

Food bank providers in Jersey are independent charities run by small teams of volunteers. This is different to the UK, where the largest network of food banks is run by the Trussell Trust, and a household will in most cases be referred by a third party (such as a GP or social worker) or interviewed before being given a voucher to exchange for a food parcel. In Jersey, there is no centralised voucher system or common criteria for eligibility and food parcels are available to people who request them.

The food banks operating in Jersey today are all motivated by religious beliefs and the support they provide is non-judgemental. I fully endorse the open and welcoming stance currently taken and am grateful that Jersey benefits from such a strong tradition of voluntary service.

Given the small size of the local food banks, tracking families through their use of food banks could create a barrier to their use as well as requiring significant administration from the food bank volunteers themselves. A tracking system would also require careful consideration of data protection principles.

Officers have a good working relationship with the food bank providers in Jersey. The food bank providers support the Government in gaining an understanding of the reasons for food bank use in general terms but no specific action is being considered to track individual families through their use of local food banks.

In the event that an Income Support household receives a payment in excess of its legal entitlement, a repayment schedule will be set up. Each case of overpayment is considered individually by an officer who will set a repayment level that recognises the household's ability to repay. This process will take into account a range of factors including the household's total income and any additional costs they face.

Food bank volunteers understand the Income Support rules but do not automatically have access to individual benefit details. If a volunteer has any specific concerns about any aspect of a household's benefit entitlement, they can ask permission from the household to speak directly with officers at Customer & Local Services.