

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 8TH MARCH 2016**

Question

What housing policies have resulted in the apparent reduction in rental support available to low-income families, given the differences between the figures produced in the House Price Index for quarters three and four 2015 for average private sector rents and the accommodation component of Income Support?

Answer

There has been no reduction in the rental support available to low-income households. Rental support to private sector tenants has in fact increased as part of the Housing Transformation Programme.

Whilst the Rental Price Index provides a helpful overview of advertised rents in the private sector, it is an ongoing piece of work being developed by the Statistics Unit. The Index represents an average of all rents across the private rented sector and includes the full range of different types of accommodation,.

The Income Support limits for private sector rents are linked to the average rental value of social housing properties, following the recommendation set out in R.44/2013 'Options for Income Support in the Private Rented Sector' and subsequently approved by the States Assembly in P.1/2014. These changes ensured that the Social Security Department was able to meet its obligations under P.33/2013 'The Reform of Social Housing.'

Following the recommendation of R.44/2013, the Income Support limits for private sector rents were set with reference to the average rents that could be achieved across a variety of types of accommodation administered by the former Housing Department, if rent was set at an open market level. This provided an equivalent average rent for comparable properties in the open market, which is a fair point of reference for the size and standard of accommodation that is included in the Income Support scheme.

The Income Support limits were increased in 2014, which provided additional support of £1 million per year to private sector tenants as part of the Housing Transformation Programme. Support for private sector rents has also been fully protected within the Medium Term Financial Plan, and rental components for private sector tenants are due to rise in each of the next 4 years.

This is a fair and sustainable way of providing support to low income private sector tenants with the costs of renting.