



Deputy Elaine Miller  
Minister for Social Security

**BY EMAIL**

11th January 2023

Dear Minister,

**Ministerial Response – Review of Income Support Overpayments**

I am writing to you in order to express the disappointment of the Health and Social Security Panel in relation to the Ministerial Response that has been provided to the Panel's report 'Income Support Overpayments'.

The Panel reviewed the response has agreed that it would like to request an updated version to be shared with it, taking into account the points of concern raised below:

1. The Minister's response to recommendation 2, although accepted, does not address the Panel's recommendation that communication to the claimant regarding an overpayment that has occurred at the fault of the Department *includes acknowledgment of the error and apology*. Please refer to this point specifically.
2. The response to the Panel's recommendations 4 and 11, where both have been 'partially accepted', state that "*the Minister cannot commit to this specific recommendation forming part of the new system*". It is the Panel's view that, based on the evidence received, collecting data on why overpayments occur and the processing time for changes of circumstances is vital to "*improving the understanding of customers and their interactions with GOJ*". Please can you provide further explanation as to why you cannot commit at this time to these requirements forming part of the new IT system.
3. The response to recommendation 5 does not specifically address the impact of overpayments on an individual's **mental health and wellbeing**. Evidence received during our review indicates that an individual's wellbeing is not always considered during this process and, worryingly, some are left feeling suicidal. Please can you amend your response to advise how you currently acknowledge the impact of overpayments on claimants' wellbeing.
4. The response of recommendation 7 states that "*wellbeing of children is an important consideration and is always taken into account in making decisions*". The Panel did not receive evidence to support this statement during its review. Please can you evidence how the wellbeing of children is considered at every stage of the process.
5. The response to rejected recommendation 12 states that "*CLS Officers are not recruited on the basis of gender, and it would be inappropriate to do this*". Please note that the Panel was not suggesting that officers be recruited based on their gender. However, we are aware that female staff are already employed within this role. The

Panel received evidence that contradicts your statement that *“it is always explained to the customer that if it is not convenient the officer will reschedule or arrange an appointment in the office”*. Furthermore, during a States Sitting on 28th November, you were asked about your response to this recommendation to which you advised *“we will take into account when home visits are conducted that the appropriate gender and nature of officers are being sent to the visit.”* The Panel would be grateful if you could revisit this recommendation based on the answer given in the States Assembly and consider whether rejecting it is in line with that and the evidence you provided during the review.

6. In response to recommendation 21 you advised that *“the new IT system will not be based on a client relationship model. This type of model would not provide the functionality needed in the new system.”* However, in a Public Hearing on 25th July, the Chief Officer for CLS advised that a client relationship model was something he hoped would be achieved in the future but that the current IT systems do not allow it. Please can you amend your response to include an explanation as to why this is no longer your long-term objective and the reasons why it would not provide the functionality needed.

The Panel would be grateful for a response by Thursday 18th January. The Panel will then consider the response further and discuss whether to take any further action as required.

Yours sincerely



Deputy Rob Ward  
Chair, Health and Social Security Scrutiny Panel