

2020.03.09

**7 Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour of the Minister for Social Security regarding the process followed when an Islander was informed of the suspension of their Income Support claim: (OQ.79/2020)**

Will the Minister advise what information is gathered and what process is followed, before an Islander is provided with notice that their income support claim is being suspended?

**Deputy J.A. Martin (The Minister for Social Security):**

Income support is designed to make adjustments to claims as household circumstances change. This ensures that households continue to get the right level of benefit payments. At each change, supporting information is needed to ensure that the adjustment is accurate. Most adjustments are made when claimants notify Income Support with information. However, if an officer has reason to suspect that a claim is being paid at an incorrect rate, they will contact the claimant by letter to review the claim and request information. As soon as the information is received, the claim is adjusted and if any payments are being withheld they are released. The claimant will also receive a full amount they are entitled to. The temporary withholding helps to maintain any other payments that also may be building up.

**3.7.1 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

I thank the Minister for her answer. Does the Minister have access to and then could provide some data on how many appeals against claimed suspensions have been had and the outcomes of the nature, for whatever their reasons, for making those suspensions from the last 24 months?

**Deputy J.A. Martin:**

I do have a figure, it is about one per cent of total claims over about the last year have been withheld, some only for a couple of days. I will listen to what the Deputy says if he wants to know exactly for what, which and why reason. I had someone contact me the other day, who was concerned that they could not get bank statements going back 6 months. I said: "You do know there is a machine?" It was just an off the cuff phone call. I said: "You do know there is a machine in your bank that will give you it?" "I did not know that." If they had have spoken properly to the officers down there, they may have known that. So, it is all about trading information and getting the right information as soon as possible.

**3.7.2 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Again, thank you to the Minister for answering. I would appreciate that information and we can discuss further. Just lastly, are there any plans to review the communicating process of notification, especially with the work going on with digital improvements in Government?

**Deputy J.A. Martin:**

Absolutely. We do now, we are absolutely allowing anybody to make a claim online and adjust online. I never want to get to the point where you have got the little old lady, or little man, who cannot use the computer, that cannot pick up the phone and cannot go into the Department. But for anyone who is really computer savvy, online is great and you can justify anything. Take your copy, put it through to the Department. It does not need physical, it just needs to be seen. So, we are getting there, but we have to be still maintaining it for people who are just not quite there in the I.T. (information technology) department.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Just a supplementary on that.

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

No, you have had your supplementary, sorry.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Clarification? [Laughter]

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

No, that is obviously an attempt to ask another question by another means.

**Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

God loves a trier.