



To Guernsey and Alderney News Editors

Our Ref:

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JOINT MEDIA RELEASE FROM SOCIAL SECURITY DEPARTMENT AND HOUSING DEPARTMENT

Minimum Income Standards

Officers from Social Security and Housing, with technical assistance from the Policy Council's Research Unit, are working on a set of Minimum Income Standards (MIS) for Guernsey. The outcome of the work is expected to inform a wide range of social policies.

An MIS survey will establish the level of income that people in Guernsey, today, need for a socially acceptable standard of living. This is more than just, food, clothes and shelter. It's also about having the opportunities and choices necessary to participate in society.

Minimum Income Standards in the UK are produced by the Centre for Research in Social Policy (CRSP) at Loughborough University, which developed the methodology in partnership with the Family Budget Unit at York University.

'We're doing as much of the work as possible ourselves in order to keep the costs down' says Deputy Mark Dorey, Social Security Minister. 'This involves putting Guernsey prices on the long lists of items that form the basis of the Minimum Income Standards. But it's essential that the results that we produce stand up to scrutiny. For that reason, we have contracted with CRSP for two key parts of the work. The first part is to run 8 focus groups in order to find and account for any local variations from the UK standards, such as medical expenses, property taxes and transport costs. The second part is to validate the work that our officers have done.

There will be between 8 and 12 people in each focus group. These will be Guernsey residents of different ages and family types. The groups will discuss typical family budgets in Guernsey for pensioners, working people and families.

A company called BMG Research will be selecting the members of the focus groups through interviews by phone. BMG Research is used to doing this for CRSP and have contacted some Islanders previously in connection with the household expenditure survey. BMG will be phoning people in Guernsey, starting next week to find out if they would be interested in helping. If you say that you're interested, the BMG researcher will ask you a few key questions so that they can make sure that the focus groups properly represent a cross-section of the Island community.

‘We want Islanders to know that BMG is working for the States, so that they are not surprised if they receive a phone call’ says Deputy Dorey. ‘If you say that you would be willing to help, the researcher will ask you some general questions, such as whether you are working and how many people are in your family. They will also ask whether your income is mainly from earnings or benefits or pensions. But the researcher will not be asking for the amount of your income and certainly not any bank details.’

The focus groups will take place in the last week of June and the first 2 weeks of July. They will be during the day for the pensioners’ groups and in the evening for working people. Participants will receive a payment of £25 for taking part.

‘The success of the MIS research work hinges on the focus groups because this will add the Guernsey dimension to basic work that has been tried and tested elsewhere by the social policy researchers’ says Deputy Jones, Housing Minister. ‘The outcomes of this work will close a serious gap that we know exists in our social policy data, which is why we’re happy to co-sponsor this piece of research with Social Security. It will be of huge value to the Housing Department in helping us to understand the amount of money Islanders need to be able to meet all their living expenses although, of course, we’re particularly interested in their ability to purchase or rent property.’

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