

Overpayment of Income Support Benefits – Submission from Anonymous 12

I heard the above subject being aired on Radio Jersey on Monday, when Mr Nunn and a lady who had had to resort to using a food bank were interviewed.

I also was contacted by the Social Security department, several weeks ago, and told that I owed a large (to me) sum of money. In my case it occurred because I had not informed them of the annual cost of living increases to my small UK pension. I had not considered these very kind small increases to constitute an increase in income, merely keeping the status quo.

I have never been dishonest, and the shock of that awful phone call made me feel physically ill. I am 78 and although I try very hard to keep fit and well, I am not in robust health. I had trouble sleeping for sometime afterwards, and eventually asked the doctor for sleeping tablets. It has also brought back the IBS which I had had under control.

I, like the lady interviewed, have had telephone calls with the department, but it gets one nowhere. I am having to pay back the whole amount, which means my income support, which they have calculated to amount to £133.28 every 4 weeks is now reduced, for the next three years(!) to £49.28 every 4 weeks after the deduction of £84 - the payback amount.

After receiving a final letter a few days ago setting out their calculations I rang yesterday and spoke to [REDACTED] from the income support department and asked if he thought it was reasonable to expect someone, who needed £133 every month to cope on £49, and for such an extended length of time. For reply he fell back on 'We are just following regulations' or 'procedures' or some such phrase.

I asked why a review of my income support had not happened in ten years? - which had allowed the 'debt' to reach £3,000 - and was told "We've been understaffed." I replied, 'What, for ten years!' One of the worst things is that I have received no apology whatsoever. They cannot deny that shortcomings in the department have caused many people stress, yet they pointedly refuse to apologise.

I am writing all this to you Mr Ward because I rang the Citizens Advice Bureau yesterday, after the pointless conversation with Mr [REDACTED], to ask if there was anyone in the States who may be in a position to help me and others in this horrible position and they suggested I contact you.

I apologise if this email is a bit disjointed. If you would like to phone me for any other details my number is.

Thank you so very much for any help you can give us all over this.