

Summary

The scheme was set up to make payments to islanders in less than 1 week, whilst many people were working from multiple locations in challenging conditions. The scale of the achievement should not be understated, and it is to the credit of everyone involved in the setup and continued running of the scheme that so many islanders were supported.

About the scheme

The Covid Related Emergency Support Scheme (CRESS) was established as part of the Government of Jersey's response to the Covid-19 crisis. The temporary scheme was designed to support people who had;

- been working in Jersey for less than 5 years, and
- lost their full-time employment income because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

The scheme offered basic support to households who were not eligible for Income Support. The scheme was originally envisaged to last 3 months covering April to June 2020 but was extended until 31st August 2020. It offered differing levels of support dependent on the make-up of the household and the residency and contribution histories of claimants.

Objectives

The scheme aimed to support those likely to be affected by the lockdown measures, initially forecasted to be 400 households. At its peak, the scheme supported 416 households from a variety of backgrounds. As the island moved out of lockdown via the Safe Exit Framework and businesses have reopened, many claimants returned to work and the number of households in receipt of CRESS steadily declined.

The project was highlighted for praise from the Portuguese Ambassador to Jersey as part of the support offered to the community in the Government of Jersey's response to Covid-19.

Overall scheme performance

The scheme met its objective of making payments to islanders in less than 1 week of the pandemic arriving on island. The scheme was the first in a series of schemes developed by the government to support various sections of society ensuring that whilst the impact of the pandemic was not without issue families and businesses were supported financially throughout the period.

Some high-level statistics around the scheme;

- the scheme supported over 416 households.
- over 470 applications for support.
- over £550,000 spent in support.
- over 4000 emails handled.

The team included representatives from;

- Customer and Local Services
- Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance
- Modernisation and Digital
- Shared Services
- Treasury

with additional resource provided by the Jersey Advisory & Conciliation Service, all of whom worked together to accomplish a minor miracle in setting up the scheme in such a short timeframe. As highlighted above, the scheme was faced some challenges due to being developed at pace, however it showed what can be achieved with successful collaborative working across Government.

Scheme Costs and Financials

The scheme had a budget of £710,000.

The total spend of the scheme was £550,550.

Scheme debtors at end of scheme

48 claimants owed funds back to the Government of Jersey

Total debt £28,016.51 which is 5% of total benefit spend.

Conclusion

The project demonstrated what can be achieved via cross departmental work and the team stepped up to meet the needs of islanders at short notice during a crisis, with many working long hours to get the project over the line.

The use of Office 365, in particular MS Teams, was key for cross-departmental communication during lockdown and allowed for collaborative working. The scheme was also the first benefit to only be available via online application, which worked well.

Emergency benefit schemes created at speed should avoid the use of differing rates dependent on the make-up of a household as it adds complexity to the administration of the benefit and increases the likelihood of errors.

The scheme served its purpose and showed what can be achieved in a very short space of time, in unprecedented circumstances.