GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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Public Assistance Reforms Take Effect, Strengthening Support for the Vulnerable

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The Government of the Virgin Islands has officially brought the Public Assistance (Amendment) Act, 2024 into force, strengthening the legal framework for delivering social support to the most vulnerable.

The Notice, made by the Minister for Health and Social Development and published in the Virgin Islands Gazette on 31 August 2025 (S.I. No.83 of 2025), appointed 1 September 2025 as the commencement date. The Act introduces important reforms designed to improve the efficiency, fairness, and accessibility of the Public Assistance Programme.

Minister for Health and Social Development, Honourable Vincent O. Wheatley, said the amendments reflect the Government's commitment to modernising social protection.

Honourable Wheatley said, "This Act represents a significant step toward ensuring that assistance reaches those who need it most in a timely and transparent manner. It modernises our approach to social protection, making sure the system is more responsive to today's realities and more accountable to the people we serve."

Meanwhile, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Social Development, Ms. Tasha K. Bertie, added that the reforms are also about improving the client experience.

"With these amendments, we are moving toward a more streamlined, people-centred system," PS Bertie said, adding, "Applicants will benefit from clearer processes, stronger safeguards, and greater support as they navigate the programme. Our aim is to build a safety net that is both compassionate and effective."

Ms. Bertie said the ministry will continue to update the public on the implementation of the new measures and provide guidance on how to access assistance under the revised framework, including guidance on eligibility thresholds, categories of support and the appeals process.

The Ministry of Health and Social Development remains committed to improving the health and social well-being of the people of the Virgin Islands.

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