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5 Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier of the Chairman of the States Employment Board regarding exit interviews for public sector employees: (OQ.212/2019)

Will the Chairman advise how public sector employees are informed of their entitlement to an exit interview post-resignation?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

The Connétable of St. Ouen is answering the questions.

Connétable R.A. Buchanan of St. Ouen (Vice-Chairman, States Employment Board - rapporteur):

I would also like to thank Deputy Alves for allowing me to answer this question, although she may regret the decision once she has had the answer. The Government of Jersey leavers' process requires managers to book an exit interview with an employee, once they have resigned. It is the manager's responsibility to inform the employee of this entitlement. Where an employee does not want an exit interview with their line manager, an alternative is offered either by a more senior manager, or with a human resources adviser.

3.5.1 Deputy C.S. Alves:

Will the Chairman, therefore, advise why guidance regarding the entitlement to an exit interview is not included in any correspondence post-resignation to States employees, as can be confirmed by 3 Members of this Assembly, including myself, who left States employment last year?

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

Yes, I thank the Deputy for her question. I cannot give her an immediate answer, because I was not aware of that issue, but I will undertake to investigate that and get back to her. If that is the case, then I can assure her it will be implemented immediately, so that future employees who leave will have that in their leaving documentation, if that is not the case.

3.5.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister agree that there is a difference between being informed that you are entitled to an interview and being invited to give an exit interview? Will he make inquiries with the relevant people and officers to make sure that when any member of staff leaves, that they are invited in a timely manner to give an exit interview, but also that it is with the right person conducting the interview, not necessarily the person directly employing them from their particular section?

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

Yes, I thank the Deputy for his question. I think that is pretty much what my answer said, although it was probably spun out in a way that did not make it clear. But it is the manager's responsibility initially to approach the employee and ask them if they would like an exit interview and to book that interview. If the employee says that they do not want an interview with their manager, perhaps because that is the reason they are leaving, then they are offered an alternative with either another senior manager or an H.R. (Human Resources) adviser, so that is in place. But I will undertake to the Deputy to double-check that that is the case, but that is my understanding of what happens.

3.5.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

If it is the manager's responsibility to make them aware of the exit interview, what are the consequences if managers do not do that?

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

Without wishing to go into much detail, they are in breach of their managerial employment code, the States Employment code, so that they could be disciplined if that was the case and they refuse to do it. It is worth making the point that we are implementing an online H.R. system, which will allow us to check that much more accurately. I refer the Deputy to a question that was put in the House on 2nd July this year; we did give an undertaking that that will be implemented by the end of this year and I can assure the Deputy that that is going to be the case. I have seen some first cuts of it, but it will allow us to monitor these things much more closely to ensure that these things do take place. Because, clearly, I think we all agree it is important to find out why employees are leaving us and to record that and see whether there is a trend.

3.5.4 Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour:

I thank the Constable for referring to my written question on 2nd July, which prompts my question, where he does state: "The revised exit interview process will be live during the last quarter of the year." Could we have some exact details on that? Does he agree with me that a robust exit interview programme reduces the company's, or in this case, the States of Jersey's exposure to certain types of prospective liability, such as whistle-blower claims?

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

Yes, answering the second part of the Deputy's question first. Yes, I totally agree with him and this is obviously why we are doing it. I have seen a first cut of the system and it will record contractual reasons for leaving, as well as employee's stated reasons for leaving and we will be able to collate that and see where there are trends which we will be concerned about.

3.5.5 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

A quick supplementary. Can he confirm; it says in the written answer: "This will be triggered for all leavers, not just those members who resign."?

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

Yes, I can confirm that.

3.5.6 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Would the Minister agree that it is clear that exit interviews are not happening consistently as a matter of course and, therefore, any outcomes from them is limited, particularly in areas where bullying and harassment may be an issue for a member of staff leaving?

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

I am not entirely sure that is the case. Until we have our system, we cannot be sure that that is happening. I see the Deputy is nodding, but it is a concern that that might not be the case. But I can assure you with an electronic... where managers have to complete it online, that where it is not being completed we will soon be able to highlight that.

3.5.7 Deputy R.J. Ward:

I would ask the Assistant Minister, therefore, to look very closely at this, because I can confirm that they are not happening as a matter of course. Therefore, there is no data on why some people are leaving the public sector, which is not good for the future of the public sector.

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

Yes, I understand the Deputy's concern, but I can only reiterate what I have said. We are alive to this issue and we are introducing an automatic system, which will ensure that where there are gaps they are eliminated.

3.5.8 Deputy C.S. Alves:

Given that the Chairman has stated that it is the manager's responsibility and that they could be in breach of a code of conduct if they are not carrying this out, is the Chairman aware of any complaints of any breaches?

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

Not as I stand here now I am not, but I will undertake to investigate to see whether there are any complaints and I will get back to the Deputy and let her know some statistics on that.