

2.12 Deputy J.A. Hilton of the Minister for Social Security regarding work experience placements of Jersey Employment Trust clients within government departments:

Can the Minister advise how many clients of the Jersey Employment Trust have been placed within government departments on work experience placements and, how many, if any, of these placements resulted in permanent part or full-time employment?

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley (The Minister for Social Security):

As Minister for Social Security, I am responsible for providing an annual grant to the Jersey Employment Trust and my Assistant Minister sits on the board. In answer to this question, I have requested information from J.E.T. (Jersey Employment Trust) as my department does not have any operational responsibility for the Trust's activities. J.E.T. has advised me that there are currently 8 clients working in States departments, 4 in full-time employment and 4 part-time. There is currently one person on work experience and J.E.T. has had 6 people on work experience in the recent past.

2.12.1 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Notwithstanding him not being responsible for operational matters at J.E.T. it is very disappointing to note that so few people employed at J.E.T. or under the help of J.E.T. have been offered any help at all, and in our Strategic Plan we talk about an inclusive society and everybody being offered equal opportunities. I do find it extremely disappointing that in fact, I believe that barring the 6 placements that the Minister has just referred to, that there have been no work placements at all barring one in 2010. I find that very, very disappointing indeed and of one job that I was told of, offered to a client, which he had for 2 years at T.T.S., was withdrawn this year, which again, is extremely disappointing. I do not believe, as a Government, we are doing enough to help these people. Can the Minister confirm that he will do anything he can, within his power, to ensure that government departments do their fair bit by those clients of J.E.T. with special needs?

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

I do share the Deputy's concerns about the employment of people with disabilities. I am pleased to inform the House the J.E.T. board are working with the States Employment Board and Human Resources to produce a good practice guide on employment and people with a disability or a long-term health issue. This guide will, I believe, be released in May and will encourage not only the States of Jersey, as an employer, but all employers, to employ people with a disability or long-term health issue.

2.12.2 The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I would like to ask the Minister, what commitment will he make to ensure that the States and government departments seek to provide work for these individuals?

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

It is not my responsibility to provide work. My responsibility as Minister for Social Security is to encourage employers to take people on who are currently unemployed, whether they are unemployed because they have recently lost their current employment or whether they are long-term unemployed because of a disability or a long-term health issue and we are working very much with employers and the States of Jersey, as I said before in my previous answer, has a role to play here. Certainly with work placements to give people the opportunity to have some work experience from which they can hopefully lead to permanent employment.

2.12.3 The Deputy of St. Ouen:

The Minister spoke about encouraging, you also spoke about discussions and actions being taken between J.E.T. and the States Employment Board to provide more opportunities for these youngsters to be employed within the States system. I ask the Minister, what encouragement in

particular he is going to do, what he personally is going to do as a trustee and responsible for J.E.T. to ensure that these individuals are able to access work within the States system?

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

I suppose, in answer to the Deputy's question, I would have to say that I feel that as Minister there is a conflict of interest between my role as involved with J.E.T. and also the fact that we provide the main funding for J.E.T., and this is an issue that I am going to be looking into further and that is the reason why I have asked my Assistant Minister to sit on the board, rather than myself because I do believe there is a conflict of interest. However, that apart, I have already stated that I believe there is more opportunity for the States of Jersey to work with J.E.T. and Workwise from my department, to place people in the States departments and I will press that. I do want to see as many people taken on as possible but there are only a limited number of people that the States of Jersey is able to employ.

2.12.4 Deputy J.A. Martin:

It probably is not just directed at the Minister for Social Security, but he does, as he says, supply money to J.E.T. I sit on the J.E.T. board and I know it took over a year to get Human Resources to sit down and talk to the J.E.T. board and there is a system, the Minister for Social Security has just said. The States has a role to play and also encourage other employers to take on people from J.E.T. or people with special needs. Does the Minister not agree we do not have a part to play, we should be leading the way. The States of Jersey employ thousands of people and, in his own figures, 8 of those people have come from J.E.T. or have learning disabilities. That is a woeful number, does the Minister not agree?

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

Yes, I do agree.

2.12.5 The Deputy of St. Ouen:

If the Minister believes that he is not the correct person to champion the cause and the needs of this particular group of people who does he believe should do the job?

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

The issue about employment of people with a disability or a long-term health issue is a matter for the States Employment Board and that comes under the control of the Chief Minister.

2.12.6 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

I thank the Minister for his answers. I believe I am just looking for a confirmation from the Minister now that he will take this issue back to the Council of Ministers and impress upon every Minister and Assistant Minister that they support the initiative to get people with special needs into work placements within States departments. Do not expect the private sector to do it all for you.

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

Yes.