

18<sup>th</sup> June 2014

**Response to the Health, Social Security and Housing Scrutiny Panel, Re Employment (Amendment No. 8) Law (family friendly policy)**

**Foreword**

Since October, 2011, I have been a member of the Employment Forum and currently hold the position of Deputy Chairman for that organisation. For the avoidance of any doubt, I am responding to this consultation in my capacity as the CEO of the Jersey Citizens Advice Bureau.

At the Bureau we see the provision of enhanced employment rights as being pivotal to the overall strategy of allowing individuals to make employment decisions and choices that are taken in the context of fairness and equality, rather than economic necessity alone.

**General Comment**

The Bureau is pleased to respond to a review of the **Employment (Amendment No. 8) Law (family friendly policy)**. The year 2013 continued to see a high demand for our services with 12,289 new and on-going client issues being recorded. 'Relationship breakdown' being the number one problem with 1,718 advice issues recorded on that subject. 'Employment' was our fourth biggest area for advice with 909 advice issues recorded.

In 2014 the economic climate continues to give policy makers cause for concern and at the Bureau we see how this impacts on individuals and their families.

The provision of a family friendly working environment and corresponding legislation that is fit for purpose is desirable in any society, and specific family friendly legislation in Jersey is long overdue. We are therefore happy to get involved in providing evidence that will help re-shape employment rights in Jersey.

We are acutely aware that even if adopted, in full, these proposals would still leave us trailing behind most other western democracies. However, they are a step in the right direction.

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**In relation to the two specific questions posed by the Health, Social Security and Housing Scrutiny Panel.**

- **What is your opinion of the proposed family friendly rights?**

Taken in the round, we believe these proposals offer reasonable protection for employees who want to start a family. We are particularly pleased that the proposals go the extra step of including

parental leave and adoption leave. Families come in all shapes and sizes and it is important that any changes to the Employment Law are all encompassing.

The proposals for employees with caring responsibilities to request flexible working conditions is reasonable and the qualifying period of 15 months' service for employees to request this is, in our opinion, appropriate.

- **What impact will the proposals, if any, have on businesses and employers in Jersey?**

There is little doubt that small firms will feel the greatest financial burden if these proposals are fully adopted without any amendments. However, it is our belief that any costs associated with having to pay employees on maternity / parental leave needs to be balanced against the business costs associated with re-employing and retraining new staff, as is currently the case.

It is preferable, then, to have happy and productive staff members, who have had suitable time off to establish a family routine and then be able to return to the workplace to a job that they are familiar with and have been trained for, in order to be able to provide for that family.

Larger employers will, in the main, be unaffected as many will already provide family friendly policies that are above and beyond what is being proposed.

Malcolm Ferey  
**Chief Executive**  
**Jersey Citizens Advice Bureau Limited**