

3.9 Deputy S. Power of St. Brelade of the Minister for Social Security regarding local employment figures for 2013:

In light of the significant time spent arranging interviews for unemployed Islanders and liaising with potential employers, can the Minister confirm what statistics for 2013 his department has that record the performance of locally born people seeking employment, the number of successes with job seekers placed but also those who do not turn up for interviews arranged or, once offered a position, only last a matter of days in a new position?

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

The Back to Work programme provides significant support to local qualified, not necessarily locally born, job seekers to both help them find and then stay in work. In 2013 the Back to Work team supported job seekers to secure 1,818 paid jobs. In October 2013 we introduced changes to income support legislation strengthening the department's ability to sanction people who fail to look for work and also introducing a sanction to deter people from giving up work. Since the new sanctions were introduced in October 2013, 506 warnings have been issued to job seekers. While some of these would have been as a result of not turning up for an interview, it could also include actions such as failing to apply for enough jobs, not attending training courses, or failing to attend appointments with their employment adviser. Furthermore, 71 sanctions have been applied to those giving up work without good reason and this would include those who have walked out of a job after a few days. In January I announced an increase in the earnings disregard for income support, claims to 23 per cent which means that the financial incentive to find and stay in work is at its strongest since the introduction of income support.

3.9.1 Deputy S. Power:

I am very grateful to the Minister for that information and I will probably follow it up with a written question. So 3 weeks ago, a significantly locally-owned employer in Jersey sent a request to the Social Security Department to take on 12 extra line operators in the area with the business. The first 12 that were either locally born or locally qualified seemed to show, according to this employer, a disregard for the jobs, the work, the shift hours and the interviewer. Does the Minister regard this as a recurring problem?

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

I am very disappointed to hear what the Deputy has said and if he would be willing to speak to me or one of my officers who deal with employment liaison we would happily talk to this employer and see where the process broke down.

3.9.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is the Minister prepared to publish the figures attached to the 71 cases of leaving a job without good cause so that we can find out what those causes are?

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

What I can tell the Deputy at this stage is that, of the 71 sanctions, 10 were reversed as a result of the addition of additional information which proved good cause. I would have to check with officers if the detail of these cases would be ... could be publicised because it could be easy to identify the individuals and therefore it might not make it possible.

3.9.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Surely, the Minister can find a way of anonymising 71 actual incidences to make sure that they are not identifiable, and will he attempt to do so and publish those figures?

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

As I said in my earlier answer, it depends on whether we can do this without revealing the identities of the people involved.

3.9.4 Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier:

I know after October 2013 this Assembly agreed new sanctions whereby any individual who left employment without good cause was penalised. Can the Minister confirm that those new employees, those individuals who were recently placed, maybe only say for a week or 10 days, placed in a new employment and then leave, does the sanction of 6 weeks income support being withdrawn still apply?

Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

Every case is treated individually. When a long-term unemployed person is placed through Back to Work with an employer, we have a system of mentoring that person through the first 6 months of employment and we would hopefully deal with any issues or disputes by speaking directly with the employer. Where we have monitored the situation and we are satisfied the employee made every effort to remain in employment the sanction would not apply. The sanction is to lose the ... if they walk out of a job without just cause, is to lose the adult component of income support for 13 weeks.

Deputy S. Power:

I thank the Minister for the information he has supplied. Could the Minister ... I will submit a more detailed written question just to confirm the data he has outlined this morning and I would ask him that he would ... I would ask the Minister, would he be prepared to answer a substantive reply to a written question. Thank you.