

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 1st DECEMBER 2015**

Question

Will the Minister inform members what reductions in funding for the Jersey Employment Trust have taken place, or will take place, which will result in reductions in the employment conditions for those vulnerable workers in sheltered employment with the Trust, along with the nature of those changes?

Do those measures live up to the Minister's promises to protect the vulnerable during her tenure?

Answer

The Jersey Employment Trust (JET) is an independent organisation that receives a block grant from the Social Security Department. Alongside other independent organisations receiving grants from Social Security, the funding to JET needs to be considered in line with overall savings targets set for the Department. In 2015, Social Security will deliver £330,000 of savings, representing 2% of its non-benefit budget. As part of that savings target, the grant provided to JET for 2015 has been maintained at the same level as the 2014 grant.

Departmental cash limits for the next four years are set by the MTFP process. As approved by the States Assembly earlier this year, savings of £90 million in non-benefit expenditure are required by 2019. Combined with the 2015 savings targets, this equates to 18% of net expenditure over five years. If decisions are made to protect specific areas of public spending then the impact on other States services will be even greater. States approval has also already been received for a reduction in the Social Security departmental benefit budget of £9.9 million by 2019 and legal changes to achieve that reduced budget have been finalised.

Detailed plans for 2017-2019 will be finalised next year, but it has already been agreed that in 2016, Social Security will deliver a further £296,600 of savings – 1.8% of the departmental non-benefit budget. Departmental officers have a good working relationship with JET and discussions are ongoing in respect of the future level of the grant for the next four years.

JET is a Charitable Trust which is managed by an independent Board of Trustees. It receives funding from a number of States departments and also raises income directly, from both fund raising and from commercial activities. The 2015-2019 JET business plan includes an aim to become “financially less dependent on the States of Jersey”. The Board of Trustees, on the advice of the senior management team at JET, provides direction on service provision and the maintenance and development of income generating activities. The Board takes decisions in the best interests of its clients and to ensure that the overarching aim of the Trust is being fulfilled.

The funding provided to JET from Social Security supports vulnerable people who have a disability or a long-term health condition with employment support and training. Other areas of departmental funding provide support to vulnerable people in other ways. Given the restrictions on the overall funding available to the Department, the way in which these services are provided must be made as cost-effective as possible, both for services provided directly and through third-party organisations. This will help to protect all the frontline services that are utilised by a wide variety of vulnerable groups.

Alongside other Ministers, I am committed to achieving the targets set in the MTFP, to ensure that the island returns to sustainable public finances and that essential growth is supported in the vital areas of health and education.