

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 29th MAY 2012**

Question

Given that in his response to question 6856 the Minister stated that “*costs for temporary agency workers and for States of Jersey employees are fairly evenly balanced*” will he give members a detailed breakdown of these costs?

Will the Minister state in what services and at what grades the additional 8.7 staff (from 58.8 FTE employees in the 2011 Annual Business Plan (ABP) to 67.5 FTE in the 2012 ABP) are employed within the Department?

Will he further state in what services and at what grades the 27 employees on ‘zero hours’ contracts and not on headcount are employed?

Will he also state the weekly hours involved, and the length of service, along with the anticipated end dates, for these 27 employees?

Will the Minister state whether employment agency workers and Social Security staff work alongside each other on the same tasks and, if so, how do their contracts compare in terms of hourly rates, holiday pay and notice periods?

Will he explain the degree of “short-term fluctuations in workloads” or of “uncertainty in permanent funding” which justifies the need for such a high proportion of Social Security staff (28%) to be employed on ‘zero hours’ contracts?

Answer

I am advised that the percentage mark-up cost charged by individual agencies is commercially sensitive information and therefore the States of Jersey is not able to disclose this figure. However, the cost for employing staff directly within the States of Jersey include 13.6% for employer’s pension contributions and 6.5% for employer’s social security contributions which offset the administrative and other costs charged by an agency.

The Deputy will be aware that the costs and budgets for the Social Security Department are apportioned between three separate funds and the costs & FTE published in the Annual Business Plan are based on the amount apportioned to tax-funded expenditure only.

The overall FTE of the Department is published in the Social Security Department Business Plan which shows an overall FTE for 2012 of 147, and 145 for 2011. This growth relates to additional permanent staff added to support the changes to contributions from 2012.

The 27 agency staff engaged with the Department were paid through their agency against the following grades:

Civil Service Grade	Number of people
5	11
6	2
7	13
9	1

22 agency staff were engaged within Work Zone and the Back to Work programme, 2 in Income Support, 2 in Health Zone and 1 in Contributions.

Agency employees worked full time, 37 hours per week. The length of service varied, 10 people commenced work in 2011 and the remainder commenced during 2012. The nature of the relationship with the agency means that end dates are not normally specified at the commencement of the placement.

Employment agency workers and Social Security staff work alongside each other on the same tasks. The hourly rates for the agency staff are set by the grade of the substantive post, so, for example, if an agency worker is covering a grade 5 role then their hourly rate is the equivalent to a grade 5 civil servant. Holiday pay for agency staff is rolled up into the hourly rate at 4%, whereas the States of Jersey employees are entitled to a minimum 22 days annual leave per annum which they take as time away from work. The nature of the contract with the agency is that notice is not normally required and therefore an agency worker's entitlement to receive and give notice is different than that which applies to directly employed workers.

Since 2011 and in response to increasing unemployment, the Department has secured additional short term funding to increase resources to provide support to those Actively Seeking Work. In 2012 further funding was agreed and this has allowed us to increase resources further and also fund new roles within the cross departmental Back to Work team which the Department is leading.

The Department has made growth bids within the Medium Term Financial Plan to support the Strategic Priority – Get People into Work. Once we have secured this funding we will recruit into either Fixed Term Contract roles or Permanent positions depending on the roles and the length of the funding streams agreed.

Temporary staff can be used to cover short term fluctuations in workloads or where a member of staff needs to be covered for a period to ensure customer service is maintained. For example this could be to cover peaks in customer activity, quarterly contribution cycles, maternity cover, personal development secondments, staff unpaid leave/career breaks or IT development testing.