

24.02.06.

**9.5 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of the Minister for Social Security regarding the family friendly elements of the Employment (Jersey) Law 2003. (OQ.20/2024)**

Given the Assembly's adoption of P.54/2019, as amended, will the Minister detail her plans to complete the review into family friendly elements of the Employment (Jersey) Law 2003, and how she intends to ensure the inclusion of a wide range of contributors?

**Deputy L.V. Feltham (The Minister for Social Security):**

From my initial briefings, I understand that the current work plan is set to complete the review in quarter one of this year and that the consultation period for the review concluded on 22nd December last year. I also understand that the Deputy had worked quite hard with the previous Minister to ensure that the consultation included more people from an early years background. I will be meeting with officers next week and during that I will be seeking assurances that the consultation was inclusive and has received a wide range of contributors in order to inform this important work.

**9.5.1 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

I thank the Minister for her answer and I believe and I hope the Minister agrees with me that the consultation should be extended as it did not go on for very long at all. Would the Minister commit to extending that consultation, if necessary, to ensure a wide range of contributors?

**Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

If it transpires when I have briefings that the consultation did not get a wide range of contributors then, yes, I would be looking at potentially extending or looking at other ways to consult with such a wide range of contributors. Obviously I would need to say that if that was extended then the completion of the review may then be delayed and I would then also need to look at what impact that would have on other work. I am committed to inclusion, so I would be seeking the assurances that this consultation is as inclusive as possible and representatives from all sides are represented within that.

**9.5.2 Deputy M. Tadier:**

It may seem like a strange question that I am asking the new Minister for Social Security, but does she also accept that there are many families in Jersey that do not have children and just because a family unit does not have children it does not mean that they do not have the right to also have some consideration in a flexible working model? Would she consider perhaps looking to extend the traditional provisions to include flexible working more generally, and working models that reflect proper work-life balances for all workers in Jersey?

**Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

I thank the Deputy for his question. I think it is a very interesting area and I would be prepared to look at considerations of what could be done within the Employment Law around that area.

**9.5.3 Deputy H.L. Jeune:**

Does the Minister at this stage, having initial briefings, know if data has been collected and know how many parents are taking their full year of leave?

**Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

I am sure the Deputy will appreciate I am looking through my briefing notes trying to see. I cannot see it in the notes that I have, but again I think that is important data and information to have, so that we can look at the success or otherwise of the legislation changes that were made and the supplementary programmes, such as the parental benefit that supports employers and employees to make the best use of that legislation. I will commit to getting back to the Deputy with that data, if I am able to provide it, and if I do not have the data at the moment I will ask officers if we can seek it.

**9.5.4 Deputy H.L. Jeune:**

I thank the Minister for committing that she will share the data with me but also with the Assembly when she is able to get it. Drilling down further into that data, I think it will be important to understand how many fathers are taking their full leave and, if not, why they are not taking that leave and understand the barriers to that. I would like to ask the Minister if it is possible to look specifically further into the data and look at if fathers take the full leave and if not, why not.

**Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

Yes, I would also be more than happy to look at that. It was an important part of the update of the Employment Law, that rights were extended not just to birth mothers but second parents as well and I think it is important to look at that data.

**9.5.5 Deputy I. Gardiner:**

Would the Minister share her views how long she thinks is the best for the child to be cared for at home by parents?

**Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

My own personal view is that it is as long as possible that the parents wish to spend at home with that child. I know people's personal circumstances very often mean that they do have to return to employment before they may feel ready. I was very fortunate to have a very long maternity leave with my daughter and having that time was very important to me. I appreciate that I was in a privileged position to be able to do that. I would seek to work to enable as many parents as possible to spend as much time as they can with their children. At the end of the day, it is a decision for each parent in consideration of their own circumstances and what might be best for them as well.

**9.5.6 Deputy I. Gardiner:**

Would the Minister agree that the considerations are, most of the time, funds-related and it is not really a choice, but a choice between bringing food home and wages and care for the child? What is she going to do about it?

**Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

Yes, I would agree with the Deputy's statement that very often decisions are made on the basis of cost, so what I can do about it is fairly limited, but I am happy to talk around that around the Council of Ministers' table, as well as look at further improvements to the employment legislation that meets the needs of employers as well as employees, to try to improve the options for people with young children.

**9.5.7 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Following on from that question, if it does emerge from the consultation that families are not able to access this leave with their children because they cannot afford to take that time off from work, where would the Minister propose the funding should come from to support more paid parental leave?

**Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

I am not yet in a position where I have been able to see more detailed budgets for my own department or discuss budgets across the table at the Council of Ministers, so I am unable to answer that question at this point in time.