

3.5 Deputy M.B. Andrews of St. Helier North of the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning regarding the Skills Development Fund (OQ.79/2025):

Will the Minister advise the number of Islanders to date who have received funding through the Skills Development Fund?

Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier Central (The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning):

Since its launch, 1,656 residents have attended courses subsidised by this scheme.

3.5.1 Deputy M.B. Andrews:

I want to ask the Minister whether he will look to potentially expand the scope of the Skills Development Fund and, if so, will that happen before this term of office?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

One has to remember that grants are paid to training providers, not directly to residents, as the question suggested, but we have dealt with that. The Skills Development Fund was reviewed in January 2025 and recommendations to use the funds more proactively by identifying priority skills gaps and tendering publicly for training to close them. To put that simply, yes, we are trying to improve its application to make it more proactive; I think the way that funds are allocated as well. Some very good work has gone on behind the scenes in identifying skills gaps from Skills Jersey who work with businesses, who I thank for their input. So, yes, I think we can be more proactive with that scheme.

3.5.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Would the Minister clarify that he is committed to apprenticeships and the ethos that lies behind the Skills Development Fund and maybe outline what some of his commitments are to making sure that apprenticeships and skills for young people, and indeed for the working population, are fit for the future?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes, absolutely. I do thank the Deputy for the question. "Apprenticeships" has become a term that seems to encompass absolutely everything, so work is being undertaken on working with us as to what apprenticeships will mean for the Island. I personally think there needs to be a statutory provision of apprenticeships, but that has to be done correctly, it has to be done effectively, and in a sustainable way. The other part of the question, is there a commitment? Yes, there is. I could read a list of the things that are going on but you would have to stop me by the time I got to the end, but I am happy to provide the Deputy with that. If Members are interested, perhaps we can do some sort of presentation on the skills gap analysis that has been undertaken because I think it has given us much more directive and - what is the word I am looking for? - enriched information in the way in which we apply this fund and, remember, it is not just this fund that deals with apprenticeships, there are other things that go on day to day and have been going on for years and years.

3.5.3 Deputy I. Gardiner:

Would the Minister specify 5 top gaps that were funded from the skill funds last year and this year?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Five examples are: low carbon heating system design installation, general roofing insulation, solar panels and photovoltaic systems, wall and loft insulation design and installation, advanced fire detection and alarm quantification grounds work. I think that is 5 but there are more. It is a very wide-ranging area but what we have to do - and this is the work that is going on and I think will make it more successful - is to really identify where those skills gaps are, so we are not putting money into areas. It is easy to put money into areas to identify but then there are not the number of jobs there that we thought there were and perhaps there is not the gap that there was. We want to try and target that money as well as possible. It may not be

perfect, sometimes we might target something and there is a very changing world of work, as the Deputy knows, but those are the top 5. Well, not top 5 but 5 of them.

3.5.4 Deputy I. Gardiner:

What was the maximum amount allocated per apprentice per trainer from the skills fund?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Again, this is money that goes towards the provider of the training, so it is difficult to allocate that. The maximum per apprentice from this, very difficult; I do not have that information in front of me. For example, there was £69,503 in 2024 that went towards digital upskilling courses, so if you divide that by the number of students, I suppose. But this money in the apprenticeship through the Skills Development Fund goes towards training, courses and skilling up, not towards individuals. I think the question itself was slightly misleading; that is not a criticism, it is an observation. This is a general fund; it is not as if we fund per student with it.

The Bailiff:

A final supplementary, Deputy Andrews. No?