

2.6 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Social Security regarding placements by agencies in 2004 and 2005 to assist those on benefits to obtain employment:

In answer to questions on the 17th January 2006 regarding the minimum wage, the Minister listed several agencies or mechanisms to assist those on benefits to obtain employment. Will the Minister inform Members how many persons were placed by these agencies in 2004 and in 2005?

Senator P.F. Routier (The Minister for Social Security):

The list of agencies to which the Deputy refers is part of the Code of Practice on Therapeutic Work and the Employment Law, which was appended to the response to the previous question. The Code of Practice provides this list to show the different types of support available to employers and employees with issues around work, disability and illness. The list includes JEND (Jersey Employment Network on Disability) which is specifically a network of employers sharing best practice and does not place people into work itself. The other organisations work both individually and together to support the most vulnerable in our society, many with profound disabilities, and may at any time offer training and voluntary therapeutic or work placements. Clients may go through several types of training or work experiences and some find their own work after a short period of support. However, many people are able to help themselves and find work without further support. With regard to collating the statistics held by the individual organisations and also eliminating the potential overlap that there is, because clients can use various services, it would be - I have to say - a significant task to undertake. However, what I can do is to give some indication of the numbers in 2005 which 'WorkWise' placed. They placed 62 people in 2005 and 49 people in 2004. There are also 400 people in 2005 and 332 in 2004 who were registered through the department's Therapeutic Work Scheme who are obviously being supported by the department.

2.6.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Has there been any increase in the resources allocated to help those get back to work in 2005 over 2004?

Senator P.F. Routier:

Yes, a significant increase. In fact this morning I signed a decision to enable the JET (Jersey Employment Trust) organisation to increase their facilities on the site that they have at Oakfield Industries. We are investing over £600,000 on the developments so that it will enable people to use their services and increase the numbers of people that are able to avail themselves of those services besides other things which I should mention also. At Acorn as well, there are certainly more people using those services and we are encouraging people to come in and avail themselves of that service.

2.6.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

I am grateful for the Minister's answer. Will he supply those in document form to me later on in the week?

Senator P.F. Routier:

It is the second time I have been asked for a written response to an oral question. I am not sure which is the best way to go about this. Perhaps the written question would have been better in the first place.

Senator M.E. Vibert (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

A point of information, will these question times not be available on Hansard in a couple of weeks' time?

The Deputy Bailiff:

I think they will be, yes.

2.6.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The point is that the Minister mentions one particular area where resources have been increased. He does not talk about the wide range of resources going into this area and this is going to become increasingly important as we approach low-income support. Further, can he say how many additional staff will be required when we come into the Income Support Scheme to enable as many people as is possible to return to, or take up, work in the workplace, rather than be dependant on benefit - the hand-up rather than the hand-out?

Senator P.F. Routier:

It appears that the Deputy seems to be mixing up 2 things, income support and also incapacity benefits. The reason people need support for getting back into work is if they are on incapacity benefits they obviously do need support to go back into work and if they want to get back into work. I have to say that we are recognising that some people do not want to get back into work and that is an issue which we are facing at the present time. There are people who we are asking to come to the department for an interview to take on work and they are not interested in doing that, so we are identifying that currently. That is an issue which we need to address. With regard to income support, that is a totally different piece of work - a support system for people who are on low incomes. It is obviously related to the income they receive from their work. Depending on the amount of wages they receive, they will possibly need additional support from the income support system but what we are concentrating on now is ensuring that people who do need support to get work we are trying to give as much support as we possibly can. We recognise, as much as the Deputy does, that we would have to put more resources into that and that is what we are concentrating on.