

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 17th JANUARY 2012**

Question

Will the Minister advise what additional, concrete measures he has in place to get more of the rising numbers of unemployed, especially those under 25, back into work or appropriate training in 2012?

In particular will he inform members what progress, if any, he has made in obtaining work placements for the unemployed in the public and private sectors?

Will he further state what contingency measures he has in place and what additional costs he anticipates will be placed on the Income Support scheme from the possible collapse of the fulfilment sector in the Island?

Answer

The Chief Minister has initiated a major "Back to Work" initiative, which is being co-ordinated through my department. As part of the ministerial task force, I am working very closely with the Chief Minister, and the Treasury and Resources, Economic Development and Education, Sport and Culture Ministers and I am grateful to them and their officers for their hard work which is already starting to produce some tangible results.

Members will be aware that we have recently announced a working partnership with JT. This has created a major opportunity for those already unemployed to apply for 100 new roles to be created by the Gigabit Jersey project. The jobs were advertised in the Jersey Evening Post on Thursday 12 January 2012 and we will be working with JT to match current job-seekers with the posts.

We will also be providing extensive support to unemployed candidates in preparing for interview and assessment to maximise their chances of securing one of these roles.

Building on our existing successful schemes for the unemployed, we have also extended the Advance Plus scheme which provides support to the longer term unemployed aged over 20. The scheme will be doubled which will create up to an additional 200 work placements per year for this group.

Additionally we have invested further in the Work Zone to expand the number of Personal Advisers who provide job seeking support and access to training to improve employability.

We are also working with the States of Jersey as an employer to identify opportunities and the States are meeting with Union Representatives on the 18 January 2012 to engage with them and determine how the public sector may help to address the growing unemployment situation.

At this early stage, issues under discussion will include the potential utilisation of existing vacancies, development of training schemes and identification of short term work opportunities for the unemployed.

We are investigating the scope for work placements with Community partners on a number of projects.

This is all in addition to the investment in existing initiatives such as Advance to Work and the additional 250 places at Highlands College funded from fiscal stimulus.

There is much more to do and we are advancing discussions with a number of partners/businesses in hospitality and retail.

Furthermore the Economic Development Department is continuing its work to attract new businesses and investment to the Island and consideration is being given to which capital projects can be brought forward to create jobs.

This work is being undertaken in close co-operation with the Population Office to ensure that the regulatory environment complements and enhances initiatives to support both employers and locally qualified people seeking work. For example, the Population Office has refused requests for 660 additional non-locally qualified staff over 2010 and 2011.

Back to Work is a long term programme and we need the engagement of employers and industry to provide the best employment prospects for all Islanders.

It has been estimated that the potential loss of each 100 jobs in the fulfilment industry would increase Income Support costs by £800,000 per annum. I am working very closely with the Treasury and Resources Minister to ensure that funding is available to meet the extra benefit and administration costs in the event of a large number of redundancies in this area.

In addition to the personal and social impact of unemployment, this potential additional Income Support cost highlights the importance of the need to support the reduction of non-local licences through job substitution.