

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 2nd DECEMBER 2013**

Question

Will the Minister inform members of the progress, if any, which he has made in examining the extent to which zero-hours contracts are used in the Jersey economy?

Does the Minister condemn the use of zero hours contracts by some employers in the finance sector as a mechanism to pay staff lower rates and circumvent their entitlement to sick pay and holidays?

Will the Minister also advise whether staff employed on zero-hours contracts by the Social Security Department through an agency have now been given permanent contracts and that this practice has now ceased in this Department?

Answer

It is assumed that the Deputy is requesting a progress report in relation to the Proposition 'Zero-hours contracts; Regulation' (P.100/2013) which was adopted by the States ten weeks ago, as amended by the Minister for Social Security.

The report that accompanied the Minister's amendment to that Proposition recorded that "The States of Jersey Statistics Unit intends to investigate issues relating to zero-hours contracts through its suite of business and household surveys. Such work will involve surveying businesses to estimate the overall scale and sectoral distribution of the use of zero-hours contracts in Jersey, and will also aim to measure the proportion of workers engaged on such contracts who were actually employed within a given time period as well as the average numbers of hours worked. It is anticipated that a complementary perspective will be gained by also surveying households. Such an approach will aim to examine subjective and practical issues for individuals who are engaged on zero-hours contracts.

"The report accompanying the Proposition recognises that it will take some time to achieve statistically significant information. The Chief Statistician anticipates that the timescale for producing statistically robust results is approximately 12 to 15 months, i.e. by the end of the calendar year 2014. Those results will form the basis for us to consider what further action should be taken and in what timeframe."

The Minister will be in a better position to react, as necessary, to the use of zero hour contracts in the finance sector when the findings of the investigations are available in 2014.

The Department does not currently directly employ any staff on zero hour contracts.

The Department does engage Recruitment Agencies to supply temporary staff to work in the Department. These temporary staff are not employed by the Department – they are employed directly by the Recruitment Agencies. Their contractual arrangements are a matter for the

Recruitment Agency and the individual. Recruitment Agencies do though typically use zero hour contracts for the staff they supply to the Department.

Temporary staff are used in the Department to cover short-term fluctuations in workloads, to support initiatives and projects, or where permanent need or funding has not been established. The Department will continue to utilise temporary staff in this way.