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9 Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier of the Chair of the States Employment Board regarding the mental health support provided to States of Jersey employees working at home during the Covid-19 pandemic: (OQ.167/2020)

Will the chair provide details of any mental health support that is being given to workers from all Government departments who are working from home, or who have not been able to go into their normal work environment, (such as schools and offices) due to the current COVID-19 crisis?

[10:30]

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré (Chair, States Employment Board):

The Connétable of St. Ouen, as vice-chair, is taking the question.

Connétable R.A. Buchanan of St. Ouen (Vice-Chair, States Employment Board - rapporteur):

I thank the Deputy for allowing me to answer this question. During the coronavirus pandemic, employers have had and continue to have access to a full range of mental health support. This includes 24/7 access to the Be Supportive employee assistance programme and access to local face-to-face, now of course virtual, support and telephone and counselling support for employees in crisis. Staff well-being, both mental and physical, has been a primary concern for the States Employment Board during lockdown. During the crisis we have helped colleagues to build and maintain good mental health through tailored one-to-one support by using digital events and tools, such as webinars, and the Thrive app, which I have to say I have personally used and found very helpful. That just goes to prove that even States Members are not exempt from mental health issues. Regular all-staff communications also detail steps colleagues could take to improve or maintain their mental health. As we prepare for gradual return to office work for some colleagues healthy working assessments have been prepared for their use. These include prompts around mental health for workers who remain at home, people who may suffer from anxiety from returning to the workplace and those who have struggled during lockdown. Individuals can do their own assessment and share these with their line managers or use one of the other channels I have mentioned before. In addition, a welcome pack to the workplace guide for employers making the return transition from home to the workplace has also been launched to provide further assistance.

4.9.1 Deputy C.S. Alves:

I have personally heard from numerous employees who have not had any communication passed on to them regarding mental health, access to mental health provisions, which the Constable has outlined in his response. Can the Constable state how was this information passed on to staff? Was it passed on regularly and was it passed on to not just those who have access to the intranet, for example?

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

My understanding was that most of this information would have been passed to ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

Connétable, can you start it because we did not hear the beginning of your answer. Do you want to start your answer again?

The Connétable of St. Ouen:

I thank the Deputy for her additional question. My understanding is that all staff were communicated largely electronically with this information and those that we know who did not have access were written to. But I am concerned about her remarks and obviously I will take it away and investigate and find out where, if anything, has gone wrong.