

01 June 2021

Dear Senator Moore,

Further to your call for evidence in relation to your 'People and Culture' review, please find below Unite the Union's responses to the six question within.

I note for your information Unite the Union represents membership across all government departments and across all pay groups:-

1. What are the current challenges facing the public sector in relation to tackling bullying and harassment?

Unite the Union have identified a concerning number of cases involving bullying and harassment within all departments and across all pay groups, so much so we believe this is a systemic problem having detrimental effects on employees, members and staff, with increased levels in mental health and absence from anyone involved. Senior management seem complicit and unwilling to take action in the interests of all parties involved.

The challenge identified from our representatives and myself as the Regional Officer are that middle management are ill equipped and unsupported, without the robust knowledge training or experience to conduct, conclude and resolve in the early stages nor if an escalation occurs, with little Human Resource support for localised departments being based in a central location away from the people effected.

We also note and have witnessed first-hand the increased levels of intimidation from high level management towards witnesses whom have been removed from the process in attempt to ensure the employers case against their employees.

All this proves a fundamental review of the process and management behaviour with clear transparency and accountability, ultimately directors general and their executive leadership teams should be held accountable.

2. How effective are the current disciplinary and grievance procedure and bullying and harassment policies for employees and are any changes needed?

The current disciplinary and grievance procedures are not fit for purpose with minor events for lower grade staff being escalated to extreme levels with extended suspensions and unacceptable levels of stress and anxiety causing prolonged absence, they are inequitable in the way they are administered also.

There seems to be a culture where management are treated fundamentally differently to the general workforce i.e. management/senior staff who have had bullying and harassment claims substantiated against them are rarely disciplined and able to avoid formal disciplinary process.

3. How could the existing employee exit interview policy and procedures be improved?

The exit interview procedure does not seem robust enough in relation to the real reasons someone may be leaving the business.

We understand the interview process includes an exit interview with their manager, we have experienced conflict in our member's responses during such interviews as they were uncomfortable providing details to their direct manager, where employees/members have completed the leaver survey they have no confidence in the data being handled correctly nor acted upon.

4. How is workplace culture impacted by employment policy and practice?

Within the workforce employees have pride in their roles, however management culture means morale remains low given the upheaval of the TOM process, structural changes and ongoing pay disparity with the private sector, there appears to be a lack of mutual respect from management to employees. The 'Be Heard Survey' reflects some of these points, however engagement needs to improve in some departments to gain a better reflection of the general feelings of the staff.

5. Should there be a greater degree of support for employee morale and well-being due to restructuring and, if so, what does this look like?

Wellbeing policies are in place and utilised by employees needing support however most reportedly remain apprehensive to use this process, given the first approach is directly with their manager, this needs a process of self-application on internal systems to prevent this.

The 'Be Supported' program is welcomed, however no evidence suggest the management know how to use this system or how to refer employees/members, training and promotion of self-referral is needed within employee groups.

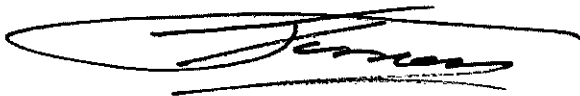
Evidence suggests that counselling referrals or the way to make these referrals are not understood by HR consultants nor management.

6. Are there any other issues that the Panel should consider as part of the review?

The management style from the very top of the public sector and its structures creates a potential to imply support for a bullying culture within the States of Jersey and although work is being conducted to improve this, who is being held accountable for the historic problems and detriment this may have caused and also what action is planned following the results of the Be Heard survey.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues at any scrutiny hearing you call.

Yours Sincerely



James Turner

Unite the Union
Regional Officer