

2025.09.08

**3.13 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity of the Minister for Social Security regarding the trainee minimum wage (OQ. 186/2025):**

Will the Minister explain the reasons for reintroducing the trainee minimum wage and detail the process undertaken to move away from the States Assembly's decision to adopt P.5/2023, which saw the integration in 2024 of the trainee minimum wage into a single minimum wage?

**Deputy L.V. Feltham (The Minister for Social Security):**

In taking the decision, I think it is important that I contextualise what a different place we were in from when the Assembly decided to harmonise the trainee rate with the minimum wage. I am really proud that we now have a significantly higher minimum wage. Following the raising of the minimum wage in April to £13 an hour, I received feedback from both employer and employee representatives as to difficulties taking on apprentices, as well as similar feedback from the chair of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel and other colleagues within the States Assembly. Following this, I asked for detailed economic advice from the chief economic adviser. It was important for me to listen to the range of views and information that I have received. I have always been clear that any decision on this would be taken in collaboration with the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning to ensure that there are sufficient opportunities available and real viable alternatives to post-16 in-school education. I am grateful to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning and Skills Jersey for the close co-operation over the last few months. I had to make the announcement and decision during the summer recess so that I could make the announcement in August ahead of new apprentices taken on in the 2025 academic year. I am also pleased to have issued new guidelines so that we avoid any exploitation of the trainee wage. Additionally, in consideration of the rates and how to set, that I ensured that we did not go to a lower rate than the £10.50 an hour that was agreed by the Assembly when they agreed to harmonise the rates. Of course, I would remind employers that this is a minimum rate and they can choose to pay more if they wish to.

**3.13.1 Deputy H.L. Jeune:**

Does the Minister accept that uncertainty around the minimum wage and trainee wage has created this instability for young workers and employers, with many choosing not to take on apprenticeships? How is she addressing these uncertainties to make up for this lost year for trainees?

**Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

I have not seen any evidence to suggest that what the Deputy is saying is correct. If she has any evidence to suggest that, then please could she pass that on to me. I acted as swiftly as I could, given the information that I had to hand and the advice I was given.

**3.13.2 Deputy J. Renouf:**

The Minister says that the landscape has changed since the original proposition from Deputy Andrews, but it has not changed since June. At a Scrutiny hearing in June, I asked the Minister whether she supported different training rates and she replied: "I think I would see that as being quite discriminatory. If somebody is doing the same job it does not matter what age they are." Can she explain what has changed since then?

**Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

Yes, I can explain what has changed since then. I worked with officers to construct a really specific set of guidelines to ensure that only employees that are on very specific traineeships and apprenticeships are eligible to receive that rate. That is different to what had been done in the past whereby the rate could have been applied to any employee in their first 2 years of service and I understand was abused by some employers in that respect.

**3.13.3 Deputy J. Renouf:**

I wonder also why the Minister has not brought a rescindment to the proposition that established the unification of those rates?

**Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

When the trainee rate was harmonised, the proposition at the time was amended to retain the part of the legislation that enabled the Minister to make a trainee rate by order, and that is why I did not bring a rescindment. Also the timing for me to have brought a rescindment would have meant that I would not have been able to make the change in time for the beginning of the academic year. I thought that that may then lead to the consequences as described by Deputy Jeune in her previous question.

**3.13.4 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

How will the Minister track whether this change in policy is resulting in more trainee positions?

**Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

I will be working very closely and continue to work very closely with the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning and his team at Skills Jersey to ensure that we are receiving the results that we need and, indeed, developing the skills that we need on-Island.

**3.13.5 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

If it does not result in an increase, what is the Minister's plan then?

**Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

I think then we would need to look at the reasons for it not resulting in an increase, and it may well not be me that would need to take action, but other Ministers, such as the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning. But we would need to see that evidence base first.

**3.13.6 Deputy H.L. Jeune:**

Many of the questions have been asked, but the Minister was clear that she had to make the decision very quickly to help the academic term 2025. Will the Minister be able to publish as soon as possible, or with the co-operation of the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning and Skills, whether those traineeships have been filled at Highlands so that they could be fulfilled during 2025, because it seems that it is very late in the day to get trainees to apply for Highlands skills training? Could the Minister publish whether those courses have been filled or not as soon as possible?

**Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

Of course that data is not my data, that is the data of the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning and I am sure that he will answer any questions that other Members or indeed Scrutiny may have.