



**Response to a Question Pursuant to Rule 14  
of the Rules of Procedure of the States of Deliberation and their Committees**

**Subject:** RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

**States' Member:** Deputy N Inder

**Date received:** 10<sup>th</sup> September 2025

**Date of reply:** 9<sup>th</sup> October 2025

**Preamble from author of Questions**

Recruitment and staff retention – Rule 14 questions

Please find a series of questions, which include an initial background to the questions on the matter of recruitment and retention within the civil and public service.

I've been made aware that a number of employees have not passed their initial probation, where the employer has cited 'not the right fit'.

**Response preamble for context from the Committee**

The Chief Executive & Head of the Public Service is accountable for the performance of the public service. This includes ensuring that effective workforce processes and procedures are in place to support the delivery of high-quality public services aligned to political priorities; that senior leaders are effectively managing and developing their teams; and that all staff are clear about their individual responsibilities and roles.

Through his Strategic Leadership Team, the Chief Executive & Head of the Public Service sets the standards, tone and strategic direction for the public service, including expected culture and behaviours, and works with service leads to support continuous improvement.

**Question 1:**

**Could Policy and Resources provide clarity on the general criteria used when employees do not pass their probation? In particular:**

- **What does the term 'not the right fit' mean in the context of working within the organisation?**
- **Over the last year, how many employees have failed their probation for this reason?**
- **More broadly, how many probationary periods have not been successfully completed, and what were the key reasons?**

The criteria used to assess an employee during their probationary period are role specific. Line managers are expected to set objectives with new employees, and performance against these will be assessed throughout the probationary period. In addition, new employees must demonstrate:

- their ability to meet the key criteria set out in their job description;
- the expected standards of attendance and time keeping; and
- behaviours and attitudes in line with the applicable competency frameworks and codes of conduct.

Most employers apply a probationary period to assess whether new employees can perform their duties to the required standards and meet expectations around behaviour, attendance, and attitude. It also gives employees the chance to confirm that the role suits them.

The Policy & Resources Committee can confirm that within the States of Guernsey, completing a probationary period is an essential contractual requirement in order to support the delivery of safe and effective public services. The States of Guernsey will always take steps to address any employee performance or conduct which does not meet the required standards. Assessing the performance of new employees during a probationary period is therefore essential as it allows an expedient approach to managing any issues and therefore helps to ensure effective use of taxpayers' money.

Any concerns arising during the probationary period are expected to be brought to the attention of the employee at an early stage, so they have an opportunity to respond and address them. However, in some cases concerns may continue or they may be of a serious enough nature that means a line manager will make the decision to not pass the employee's probationary period. These decisions are not taken lightly, and line managers will take advice from HR throughout the process to ensure compliance with the States of Guernsey's policies and procedures and relevant employment legislation.

Employees are given detailed feedback on any areas of their performance, conduct or behaviours which may require improvement. Performance and conduct issues can be quantified with specific examples; however, matters relating to behaviours, attitude and approaches are not so straightforward to describe as they often relate to patterns of lower-level concerns that are not easily quantifiable. This could include:

- difficulties in collaborating with colleagues
- a working style which is not conducive with expected standards
- inability to adjust to organisational and team cultures
- not upholding the values of the public service

These types of issues are often attributable to traits, behaviours or values which an employee cannot easily control or change but are nonetheless incompatible with their role, their colleagues and the safe and effective delivery of services. This means the individual's

approach and style do not fit the organisation's values and established ways of working.

From January 2025 to date, 14 employees failed their probation and therefore were dismissed from employment. This accounts for approximately 2.5% of all new joiners for the same period. Further breakdown of this figure cannot be provided due to the risk of identifying individuals.

## **Question 2:**

**What is the current attrition rate for new civil servants, and how does this compare to equivalent roles in similar jurisdictions?**

### ***General Feedback/Areas of Concern***

#### ***Workplace Culture & Onboarding***

- ***New joiners frequently report a lack of structured training, limited collaboration, and inadequate induction processes.***
- ***There are instances where new employees have been left alone in the office with only a manual for support, while colleagues work remotely - creating a poor first impression and contributing to early disengagement.***
- ***Training is often fractured due to staff turnover, and the absence of colleagues/managers not in the office. This leaves new hires feeling unsupported and undermining their confidence.***
- ***Feedback from candidates includes comments such as: "I'm not where I need to be"—an issue directly linked to a lack of guidance, not capability.***

Data relating to civil servants is recorded as part of a broader group known as Established Staff.

Established Staff roles operate across the public service in terms of organisational structure and service delivery, covering many areas of specialist and technical expertise, together with corporate functions and enabling services.

Examples of specialist or technical roles include: social workers; psychologists; dental officers; speech and language therapists; environmental health officers; architects, surveyors; conveyancing roles; legal roles; engineering roles; regulatory & statutory roles; data and public health roles; health and safety roles; ports roles; planning roles; education roles; and sea fisheries roles.

Enabling services include digital & technology; HR; Finance; Procurement; and Data Protection roles.

The Policy & Resources Committee can confirm that the turnover rate for new established staff as a proportion of the whole established staff workforce (i.e those with less than 12

months service) is 2.9%. It is not possible to make direct and meaningful comparisons to other jurisdictions due to differences in the way staff groupings are defined.

It should be noted that the States of Guernsey public service workforce is generally very stable with a turnover rate of approximately 13%. Across the Established Staff group more than 30% of employees have between one and five years' service and more than 55% have more than five years' service.

### **Question 3:**

**Given the concerns being raised by staff about their early experiences in the organisation, is Policy & Resources or the Chief Executive aware of how widespread these issues are? And do they have confidence that the HR team, senior leaders, and line managers are doing enough to support new employees properly?**

The Committee notes that the turnover rate of employees with less than 12 months service (for all employee groups) is on average 3.3% and only 2.9% for Established Staff which is not indicative of any widespread issues. Employees are encouraged to raise any concerns they may have with their line manager or senior leaders within their business area, or they can raise any concerns with HR directly.

All employees who leave the States of Guernsey are invited to submit an exit questionnaire. During the last three years more than 700 questionnaires were submitted, of which 12% were from those with less than 12 months' service. Of these responses, more than 80% confirmed they would recommend the States of Guernsey as a place to work and over 80% confirmed they would consider working for the organisation again in the future. The main reasons for leaving employment were stated to be career progression and the cost of living.

The Committee recognises there will always be a number of employees who are dissatisfied with their employment with the States of Guernsey and/or the way it ended. The Committee also accepts there is always room for improvement, and it would actively encourage any employees who have specific concerns to raise these with their line manager, senior leadership or HR at the earliest opportunity so these can be addressed.

Notwithstanding this, the Committee is of the view that the available data and evidence does not suggest the reported issues are widespread.

The Committee has been assured that current processes and procedures are in place to ensure line managers and senior leaders are supporting new employees effectively. These measures include:

- A States of Guernsey Induction course;
- A New Manager Induction course;
- Access to support relating to relocating to the Island;
- A requirement for all new employees to be set probation objectives in line with the responsibilities set out in the job description;

- Refreshed service area inductions;
- The provision of free access to an independent Employee Assistance Programme; and
- The provision of free access to an Occupational Health referral (to support with health and medical issues).

In addition, the Committee is aware that further work is being carried out to continue developing the States of Guernsey's induction programme. This work will include the opportunity for all new joiners to meet the Chief Executive & Head of the Public Service and the Head of Human Resources which will provide a further opportunity to collate feedback and identify any areas of concern in future.

#### **Question 4:**

**Does Policy and Resources or the Chief Executive recognise the issues raised around workplace culture and onboarding. If so, what action is being taken to improve the experience for new joiners?**

Please see the responses to Question 3 above.

#### ***Remote Working Oversight***

***Feedback suggests that flexible working arrangements are not always being used appropriately.***

- ***Multiple reports suggest misuse of flexible working arrangements, including employees working secondary jobs during contracted hours.***
- ***One employee said: "I don't want to work in the finance sector because they monitor workloads. Here they don't - so if it's nice weather, I just go home."***

States of Guernsey employees can request to work remotely (e.g. from home) under the Hybrid Working Policy.

The majority of public service roles are not suitable for remote/home working. In addition to the obvious front-line roles such as nursing, teaching, law enforcement, fire and rescue, and States Works, many more administrative roles are not suitable for remote/home working as they are customer facing or require access to specific IT systems.

Consequently, employees are granted permission to work remotely in line with the Hybrid Working Policy only if the role they occupy is suitable for consideration and if the line manager approves the request accordingly. Any approval can be revoked or amended by the line manager, in line with the policy, should this be required.

The oversight of which and how many individuals are working in a hybrid manner is handled within each service team, approved by the manager of the service area. The emphasis remains on the effective public service provision from the service area in question.

The Hybrid Working Policy sets out the requirement for staff to work a 'flexible fortnight' with a combination of office-based days and working from home/remote days across a fortnightly pattern.

The policy itself was formed based on lessons learnt from the covid pandemic whereby key public service roles had to be delivered remotely, with an expedited use of technology to enable this to happen. The Strategic Leadership Team is in the process of assessing the current hybrid working arrangements and considering whether any changes may need to be made to the policy.

States of Guernsey employees can only work secondary jobs with express permission which will not be unreasonably declined. Such permission would never extend to agreeing for employees to carry out their secondary jobs within their contracted hours and if this was found to be happening it is likely to amount to gross misconduct and actioned accordingly. The Committee is unaware of any such cases but would expect any examples to be reported so they can be dealt with appropriately.

#### **Question 5:**

**What systems or controls are in place across the organisation to monitor productivity and ensure clear expectations are set for remote flexible working?**

The monitoring of employee output is conducted by the line manager, regardless of the work setting. For example, monitoring the quality and quantity of work produced in line with the role and associated work targets, keeping the focus on service delivery and high-quality outputs from employees. Line managers are expected to ensure employees have clear objectives set and that the job descriptions clearly set out their responsibilities. Processes are in place to manage the performance of any employee whose productivity falls short of requirements.

The States of Guernsey do not use IT applications to monitor the work and relative productivity of staff. Staff who are not in the office (i.e. working remotely) will use MS Teams to join meetings and also have access to other IT systems commensurate with their role. Staff who are working remotely attend work in the same way as those who are in the office (e.g. completing work outputs, responding to correspondence etc).

#### **Question 6:**

**There have been particular concerns raised about the use of remote working within the Revenue Service.**

- **What percentage of staff within the Revenue Service currently have the ability to work from home?**
- **How is productivity measured and managed in those cases?**

As States of Guernsey employees, those working in Revenue Service may request to work remotely under the Hybrid Working Policy, provided their role is suitable. Any such requests

require the approval of their line manager. The majority of roles within the Service are not suitable for remote working. Revenue Service staff do not take confidential documents home and these must be dealt with in the secure environment of the office.

Approximately 44% of Revenue Service staff work within teams where hybrid working could be considered. Any agreed hybrid working patterns consist of no more than two days a week of remote working.

At any given time an average of 30 employees have hybrid working patterns in place. This amounts to less than 30% of the Revenue Service team.

Approximately 75% of all employees are working from the office on any given day.

The productivity of these employees is managed in the same way as all other employees as set out in the previous response.

### ***Salary Benchmarking Transparency***

***Feedback from recruitment professionals suggests that private sector salary benchmarks, when shared with candidates, are often lower - sometimes by 20% or more - than equivalent States of Guernsey roles.***

***This has led to concerns around a “trapped employee” effect, particularly at mid-to-senior levels, where individuals feel unable to move due to the perceived salary drop in the private sector. This scenario reportedly contributes to:***

- ***Job lock / career entrapment***
- ***Increased stress, burnout, and anxiety***
- ***Presenteeism — where individuals remain in post but are disengaged and underperforming due to emotional fatigue.***

### **Question 7:**

**From where does the States of Guernsey source its salary benchmarking data? Is there transparency around how public sector salaries are compared to equivalent private sector roles?**

It is always challenging to compare public sector salaries with ‘equivalent private sector roles’ because full detailed data on private sector roles are not generally published. Care needs to be taken to ensure that roles are truly comparable in terms of the scope of their role, the specific duties they undertake, and the level of knowledge and experience required. It is also important that the overall remuneration and benefits package are properly equated. Many private sector roles will carry much broader benefits packages which often include health care cover, bonuses, commission, and other incentives which largely do not apply in the public sector. In this context it is essential that any market comparisons and benchmarking are undertaken carefully and consider the full remuneration

packages and the size and complexity of roles before any positions could be considered as equivalent or comparable.

One of the primary considerations when determining pay is to ensure all posts are paid fairly in relation to posts within the same pay groups. This has become an even more important consideration with the requirement for Employers to comply with the equal pay provisions of the Prevention of Discrimination (Guernsey) Ordinance, 2022.

Salaries for roles across the public sector are therefore determined using a systematic process of structured job evaluations. These frameworks and process are accredited nationally and internationally for use in government, local government and other public authorities (e.g. KornFerry/Hay and Agenda for Change).

Job evaluation schemes are specifically designed to measure the size, scale and scope of roles based on detailed job analysis. The outcome of that job evaluation then determines the applicable salary scales. Changes to the salary scales and the associated pay rates are subject to negotiation with Trade Unions in line with agreed collective bargaining arrangements (which are legally enforceable through the Industrial Disputes (Guernsey) Law 1993).

Therefore, whilst private sector salary benchmarking is a useful indicator of market forces, the setting of salaries in the public sector is considerably more complex.

#### ***Sick Pay & Long-Term Absence***

***Under current policy, employees who have completed three years of service are eligible for six months' full sick pay, followed by six months at half pay.***

The Policy & Resources Committee can confirm that the eligibility for the full entitlement of sick pay (i.e. 6 months full pay and six months half pay) requires employees to have completed five years of continuous service.

#### **Question 8:**

**Given growing concerns around workplace wellbeing and long-term stress:**

**Are there statistics available on mental health-related absences, particularly where work stress, burnout, or anxiety have been linked to workplace conditions or perceived job lock?**

Recording mental health concerns is complex due to the wide range of illnesses, conditions and symptoms an employee might experience and the need to maintain confidentiality. As such the main category used to record absences relating to mental health is 'stress' (work-related or non-work-related). The specific cause of work-related stress is not recorded. The number of employees reporting work related stress (both short-term and long-term sickness absence) in the past 12 months was 217. This accounts for approximately 3% of the States of Guernsey workforce. It should be noted that work-related stress is not the leading reason



for sickness absence within the States of Guernsey. Non-work related stress absences are at a level of more than double those of work related stress and have impacted nearly three times the number of employees.

Extensive support is available to all employees experiencing ill-health. This includes regular contact between the line manager and employee, access to the Employee Assistance Programme (including referrals to counselling and access to support resources), and referral to the Occupational Health Service. Line managers and senior leaders are expected to carry out return to work interviews so that employees have the opportunity to raise any concerns and discuss the potential need for making adjustments to their work or their working environment which will support them with their recovery.

**Question 9:**

**How many employees are currently on long-term sick leave, and what is the estimated financial cost of this to the organisation?**

Because this figure can vary on a daily basis it is only possible to provide a snapshot as at a certain date. As at 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025 there were 77 employees across the whole public service on long term sickness absence (i.e. lasting longer than 21 consecutive days).

The cost of sickness absence relates to both loss of productivity and any direct costs associated to covering that absence. Loss of productivity is, in the majority of cases, difficult to quantify because it can be complex and intangible and is therefore not centrally recorded. For example, in many cases staff absence will lead to colleagues providing urgent cover so that the impact of lost productivity is minimised. The current cost to the organisation in terms of sick pay for these employees is approximately £975,000.

There is no other financial cost to the organisation for these absences unless their role needs to be covered temporarily. This temporary cover can take many forms including deploying casual worker cover, additional hours for existing staff, staff overtime, or occasionally agency staff. However, this use of cover is used for any type of absence (e.g. annual leave, vacant posts, and maternity leave) so it is not possible to provide the costs relating to long-term sickness absence in isolation.

**Question 10:**

**Does the sick pay entitlement reset after 12 months, allowing employees to access a new cycle of six months' full pay and six months' half pay?**

The entitlement to sick pay does not reset annually.

The sick pay entitlement is based on a rolling 12-month cycle. This means that when an employee has been off on long-term sick their entitlement to sick pay is calculated based

upon the total number of days taken off sick during the 12-month period immediately before the current spell of absence.

During any period of sickness absence, employees will be supported by their line manager in accordance with the sickness absence policy and examples of that support are highlighted in the response to Question 8 above. In the event that sickness absence continues, and it cannot be accommodated by the employer the matter will be addressed through the sickness absence policy and may include the termination of employment. However, it is also important that any decisions are taken carefully and are compliant with the Prevention of Discrimination (Guernsey) Ordinance, 2022.

## **Procurement & Agency Fees**

### **Question 11:**

#### **Are there inconsistencies in agency fee arrangements across the States of Guernsey**

There is no evidence of significant inconsistencies. The agreed rates for agency placement fees relating to the appointment of permanent employees across the public service are on around 13%. In certain cases, candidates for highly specialist roles may need to be sourced through specialist agencies and these can attract a higher fee.

### **Question 12:**

#### **What are the current agreed agency fee rates across all departments and all recruitment suppliers?**

#### **Are terms standardised across the organisation? If not, why?**

#### **As the island's largest employer, with significant purchasing power, would Policy & Resources consider introducing a flat fee arrangement (e.g. 8–10%) with recruitment agencies? If an agency declines, would they be removed from the approved supplier list?**

The States of Guernsey aim to ensure that terms are standardised as far as possible. However, in limited cases there is the need to engage specialist recruitment agencies for some roles and their terms will have to be negotiated separately.

The use of recruitment agencies to source permanent candidates is limited across the public service as most recruitment is carried out through direct advertisement. In 2025 only eight recruitment agencies were used to assist with the placement of permanent candidates and as stated in the response to Question 11, most of these already work on a flat fee arrangement. Most recruitment agencies engaged by the States of Guernsey work on an international basis which therefore significantly reduces its purchasing power.

All agencies that wish to work with the States of Guernsey must meet specific requirements that are set out within the procurement process which will include agreeing to flat fee arrangements and meeting best practice standards relating to safer recruitment. If they are unable to meet these requirements, they will not make it onto the preferred supplier list.

### ***Recruitment Process Observations***

***Ex employees have highlighted a number of inefficiencies and risks in the current process:***

- ***Delays: Candidates often report long gaps between an offer being made and the contract being issued, leading to uncertainty and disengagement.***
- ***Incomplete communication: Offers are sometimes missing key details, such as benefits or terms of employment.***
- ***Probation outcomes: Failures are frequently attributed to “fit”, but in practice often result from inadequate training or support.***
- ***Induction issues: Reports include:***
  - ***No IT setup on arrival.***
  - ***Candidates left alone with only a manual for guidance.***
  - ***Offices empty due to managers working remotely.***
  - ***No structured training plan or timeline.***

***The probation period should be a time of enthusiasm, learning, and integration. Instead, these shortcomings risk fostering apathy, frustration, and early disengagement.***

### **Question 13:**

**Do Policy and Resources recognise any of the above statements and if so, what actions are they taking to ensure that the HR function in the States of Guernsey is acting in the best interests of the employee and the taxpayer?**

The Committee is not aware of any instances where candidates have been made offers of employment which are missing any key details. Offers of employment are generally made based on a summary of the main terms. All terms of employment are then fully detailed in their contract of employment. The Committee is also unaware of any specific examples where offices have been left empty due to managers working remotely. There are very clear standards set in relation to hybrid working as detailed in the responses above and the Committee is assured that should concerns of this nature be brought to the attention of senior managers or the Human Resources function, the appropriate action would be taken to address it.

It is recognised that some new joiners have experienced delays with their IT set up; however, significant work has been undertaken between the Digital & Technology function and Human Resources to improve this.

The Human Resources function was subject to a significant reorganisation in 2024 overseen by the Chief Resources Officer. This change programme was shaped by the needs of the

organisation and informed by significant engagement with senior leaders and line managers through surveys, workshops and focus groups. A business case was produced outlining the key benefits and setting out the areas for improvement which was approved by the Committee.

As part of this reorganisation process the recruitment team (which had previously been a separate function managed outside of HR) was brought within the function specifically to improve the end-to-end process.

Workforce and HR metrics are produced quarterly as part of the corporate reporting and this data is reviewed and discussed by the Strategic Leadership Team for assurance that any trends or issues of concern are being identified and addressed.

One of the monitored metrics is the time taken to issue contracts of employment to new joiners which has improved to on average within eight working days from the date of offer being made since the HR reorganisation. There is continuing work to develop digital solutions that will further increase efficiency.

Contracts are generally issued with the provision that employment is subject to satisfactory completion of pre-employment checks (including references, DBS and police checks, verification of qualifications, identity checks and immigration and population management checks). These checks can take several weeks to fully complete; however, they are essential in order to comply with legal and regulatory obligations and to ensure the protection of the public and the safe delivery of services.

In the past year 899 new employees have joined the States of Guernsey and, as highlighted in the response to Question 3, the majority of these settle into their roles without concerns being raised. From time to time individual issues will arise where candidates or new employees are not satisfied with some aspect of their appointment, induction or probationary period. The Committee is assured, however, that when such cases arise and the HR function and/or senior leaders are made aware of them, they are investigated and if any problems are identified that appropriate measures are put in place to resolve them as quickly as possible.

In relation to the statements made about induction and probation please refer to the responses given to Question 3 above.

***High Staff Turnover / Exit Management***

***It appears that there is little (if any) independent oversight of the exit interview process. While exit surveys are in place, it is unclear:***

**Question 14:**

**Who receives and reviews the feedback and what actions, if any, are taken in response?**

Exit questionnaires are issued to all leavers and they are invited to complete them on a voluntary basis. As mentioned in the response to Question 3 above, over 700 exit questionnaires have been submitted since 2022. The questionnaires are completed electronically and are submitted confidentially to the Human Resources function.

When a completed questionnaire contains information that raises concerns around employee treatment, line management standards or procedures not being adhered to, then these individual returns are supplied to either the line manager or senior manager for that business area as appropriate for a response.

In a situation where there are issues identified, the business area is expected to make adjustments to fully address these. This could include carrying out a cultural survey or a root cause analysis and working with HR colleagues and/or senior leadership to develop and implement any identified recommendations.

**Question 15:**

**Would Policy and Resources or the Chief Executive agree that expecting an HR Department/ Senior Leadership Team to objectively assess its own performance - particularly in relation to staff departures - is unlikely to provide a complete or unbiased picture?**

The Committee does not expect the HR function or senior management teams to assess their own performance in relation to exit interviews and staff departures. The HR function is accountable to the Chief Resources Officer who is a member of the Strategic Leadership Team and is therefore responsible for overseeing and assessing its performance across all aspects of its service, not just in relation to employee departures.

The Internal Audit team carries out reviews into HR activities and compliance with States of Guernsey policies and Directives. These reviews are carried out to ensure the best possible standards and practices are being maintained and directly support the delivery of safe and effective public services.

The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) receives regular workforce data including employee turnover, length of service, vacancy information and sickness absence levels which provides further opportunities to identify any issues or concerns that need to be addressed. The Head of HR & OD attends the SLT meeting to present this information and answer any questions regarding themes identified. The information presented is expanded or updated in response to any emerging challenges or likely future requirements to support the SLT in its function of ensuring the public sector evolves and adapts to meet current and future challenges, both internal and external.

This data is also reported to the Policy & Resources Committee on a quarterly basis.

**Question 16:**

**Would it be worth trialing an independent exit interview process to give employees/the public/and prospective candidates greater confidence in the organisation's culture and commitment to continuous improvement - especially given the States' role as the island's largest employer?**

As outlined in the response to Question 3 above, the existing process suggests that the main reasons given for leaving are due to the cost of living and for career progression. It therefore seems unlikely that an independent exit interview process would produce significantly different results and given an independent process is likely to carry significant cost to set up and maintain it is unlikely to represent value for money.

Exit interviews are only one potential indicator of organisational culture. Involuntary leavers (i.e. those who are dismissed) are always more likely to share negative views on their employment. Some voluntary leavers may also express dissatisfaction with their employment if they were unhappy with justifiable management decisions (for example refusing a pay increase, or the employee being subject to a formal performance management process). That said, there is an on-going commitment to improve all mechanisms to obtain staff feedback, with a focus on systems and processes to enable such work.

As such the information that exit interviews provide must be considered alongside other metrics and indicators (e.g. turnover level, work related stress figures, themes emerging from staff engagement surveys) in order to assess the full picture.

Whilst the public service workforce is generally very stable, there is no room for complacency. The public sector workforce is large and complex, with people-related policies and procedures applying to some 5,800 staff. The Chief Executive & Head of the Public service is committed to identifying and addressing any areas for improvement across the public sector as these emerge, and this includes workforce matters.