

PRESS RELEASE

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Government has reduced unemployment, increased local employment and improved pay and conditions

In 2011, the GSD kept several hundred young persons out of the unemployment statistics by calling them vocational candidates and paying them, in the majority of cases, less than half the legal minimum wage.

They were placed with employers in the private sector, who got them as free labour and had no obligation to employ them. Indeed, in 2012, when the Government contacted these employers they said they had no real need for them, were not teaching them anything and had accepted them as a favour to the GSD. Because the payment for working up to 39 hours was a £400 allowance and it was not deemed to be employment, there was no contract of employment with anybody and no employment rights.

The GSD had 15 years to do better than this and it is only in Opposition that they have since discovered the concept of “gold standard apprenticeships”, which they promised to deliver in 2011 and which Mr Phillips admitted during the 2011 election campaign that he had no idea what it entailed, but would hold meetings with unions and employers to find out what should be done, if he got elected into Government.

During the election campaign, the Future Job Strategy was attacked by the GSD candidates and Mr Feetham then stated that the proposed training for all the unemployed at the national minimum wage would cost £11 million a year, thereby revealing that the real number of unemployed Gibraltarians was of the order of over 1000, much higher than the published level of the time.

In 2012, in the first three months of the new Government, the GSD was already saying that the scheme was a failure because by then only two or three people had obtained permanent employment, even though it was manifestly a huge improvement on what they did in 15 years.

The results are a matter of public record and reflected in the huge increase in the Gibraltarians in employment since 2011 and drop in the numbers registered as unemployed.



For the last seven years, in spite of hundreds of hours and thousands of answers to questions in Parliament providing the GSD with explanations and information, they have continued with the same criticism and consistently lied about the alleged existence of a huge demand from the private sector to be provided with apprentices.

When Mr Phillips was challenged to provide at least one name of one employer that allegedly had approached Government seeking to take on apprentices and had had no response, he refused to do so.

In order to test the accuracy of Mr Phillips' statements, the Government contacted every employer in Gibraltar with more than 10 employees. There has been practically no response showing interest in taking employees from any employer other than those that were already in partnership with the Government and have already taken some on in the past. The reaction of Mr Phillips to this was to condemn the Government for having approached the employers.

The record of the Government speaks for itself. It has reduced unemployment, increased local employment and improved the pay and conditions of apprentices to a hugely greater extent in seven years than the GSD did in the 15 years when they were in government.

The Government will continue to provide support for apprenticeships in all the areas where employers in the private sector are prepared to enter into a commitment to provide employment at the end of the training. In the context of Brexit the Government will continue its strategy, which is flexible to respond to any changes in the structure of the economy, since it is a strategy that the training will be demand-driven and identified by the requests for labour from private sector employers.