

23.10.03

14 Deputy M.B. Andrews of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the public provisions in place for ‘sharp boxes’ (OQ.194/2023)

Will the Minister confirm what public provisions are in place for the disposal of “sharp boxes” used for the disposal of hypodermic needles and other sharp medical instruments, and whether she believes such provisions to be adequate?

Deputy K. Wilson (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

Thank you to the Deputy for his question. Sharp bins are collected and replaced by staff from all of the treating departments within H.C.S. and these include places like rheumatology, neurology and diabetes, and then they dispose of them through the accepted routes in terms of disposal of clinical waste. Users are advised of the correct process for the disposal of sharps but we are also currently reviewing the approach that we are taking because we have now got a variation in the process for those services which are now operating from the Enid Quenault Health and Wellbeing Centre. So, in direct response to the Deputy’s question, I will not be satisfied until we have got a review completed of those arrangements and that we can maintain public safety in that respect. I can advise him that private establishments such as G.P.s (general practitioners) have their own arrangements for sharp disposal.

3.14.1 Deputy M.B. Andrews:

I was wondering whether the Minister would be in support of having a central location for the disposal of such waste in St. Helier because I know some people, for instance, who may be disabled, might not have the access to go to Les Quennevais and they might struggle. I was just wondering if the Minister could provide clarity on that.

Deputy K. Wilson:

I think the Deputy raises an interesting question. I think the important thing is to reduce the period of time and the distance that these sharps need to be transported, so we are going to review the locations across the Island. I think just to centralise it in St. Helier may not be just the option that we might pursue, but I will take note of what he has considered for St. Helier in particular and, when the review has been completed, we can provide a map for Islanders as to where these facilities will be available, and that will become a lot clearer for people.

3.14.2 Deputy A. Howell:

It was just really a follow-on to say that if the Minister could look at a central location because I think now that services have been re-purposed over at Les Quennevais, it is quite a long way for people to go and quite awkward for them. So I would like to ask if the Minister could please consider this very carefully.

Deputy K. Wilson:

Yes, I will be happy to.

3.14.3 Deputy T.A. Coles:

Would the Minister be open to negotiations with the Minister for Infrastructure as the clinical waste incinerator based at La Collette could welcome deposits from private sharps boxes?

Deputy K. Wilson:

Well I think until the review is complete we do not really know what it is we need to do. But clearly, in terms of the Minister's responsibilities for waste, if there is a need to enter into those discussions, certainly I think we could work together on that.

3.14.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister believe that there may be a need for different approaches to be taken whether or not the sharps originate from prescription medicines or from illegal drug usage? If so, will that be taken into account about the possible placing of sharps boxes and also the confidentiality around the disposal and use of the public?

Deputy K. Wilson:

Well we already have areas where perhaps there may well be issues of confidentiality, particularly around addiction services. There is a needle exchange service that is operated by the addiction service and very clear processes and procedures in place for the disposal of sharps and how users of the service are supported to dispose of their kit safely. We have also got places in A. and E. (Accident and Emergency) and in the hospital and certain pharmacies across the Island. One of the things I think is that, because the Deputy has raised a question, we will have a look at whether this meets the requirements around safe and effective disposal and the test for accessibility for people. I personally think that to centralise things may disadvantage some people, so I would much rather talk to those who are in receipt of sharps, needing to use sharps, to be able to get their views as to what is the best way forward on this.