



Health and Social Security Scrutiny Panel Adult Respite Care Review

FRIDAY, 20th MARCH 2015

Panel:

Deputy R.J. Renouf of St. Ouen

Deputy T.A. McDonald of St. Saviour

Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier

Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier

Witnesses:

Assistant Chief Minister

Assistant Director of Social Policy, Chief Minister's Department

[11:00]

Deputy R.J. Renouf of St. Ouen (Chairman):

This is a hearing being conducted by the Health and Social Security Scrutiny Panel as part of our adult respite care review. We have with us Senator Paul Routier. For the record can we just introduce ourselves? So I am Deputy Richard Renouf, and I am Chairman of the panel.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes, thank you. We are accompanied by our 2 officers on the Scrutiny Panel. So thank you for coming to meet with us, Senator Routier. I think we really want to ask you what are your

responsibilities in the Chief Minister's Department for the disability strategy, who is involved with that, what you are seeking to deliver, and to what timetable. First of all, can you give us a general overview of the strategy but we want specifically to learn about what concerns us in this review, which is the proposals for respite provision and respite across the board. So it might be overnight or day care services.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Firstly, I am pleased to come to this hearing because respite has always been something I have been very interested in for many a year. I should declare an interest, I suppose. I am a trustee of Les Amis who does provide respite for adults. So although I am a trustee I am not involved in the daily, even monthly, meetings to discuss the actual service provision. I am a trustee which is there to oversee the finances. I used to be years ago, I established a lot of respite services over the years through Mencap and through Les Amis, but currently I do not have that direct involvement. So I just really need to make that clear right at the outset.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I understand, thank you.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Also I think ... I do not know if you are aware of the time constraints I have as well. I have to be out at 11.45.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes, you want to leave by 11.45, do you not?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes, that is good. Thank you. You opened up about the disability strategy. I have to say it is really in very early stages of development. What is currently happening is that there is a survey which is going to be carried out. I think it is due to go out just after Easter, which is not being labelled as a survey about disability strategy. It is going to be about health and wellbeing; is that the correct phrase?

Assistant Director of Social Policy, Chief Minister's Department:

Yes, it is health, wellbeing, and life opportunities.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes. So the reason being is that it is being focused that way so that ... it is going out I think to 10,000 households and what we would like those people that do receive them to complete the

survey so that we gain a good understanding of their position, how they are coping with life generally. So we did not want it to be labelled as a disability strategy, which people were going to say: "Oh no, I am not disabled. I am not going to take part in that" because every one of us have some little thing that we need to cope with in our daily life. There might be a spectrum of need which needs to be filled. So we want it to be as widely ranging as possible so that we can get a good understanding of the community's needs. Within that obviously there will be people who would understand and consider themselves to have a disability at some level of need. I mean that is why it is a wide-ranging survey that is going on. Once that survey has been responded to and we are able to collate all that evidence from that survey we will then be in a position to then develop the disability strategy. So it is very early days for us to say what is in the strategy because it does not exist at this present time.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Then really I think we would like to ask you what are you involved in at the moment? You head up the Service User Forum, is that right?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Tell us what work that does.

Assistant Chief Minister:

It was established at really the request of some service users who were wanting to have the ear of Government and being able to share their experiences with us, and for us to understand their needs. We meet on a quarterly basis and they come to us. It is made up of a group of people across the community. There are visually impaired people, people on the Deaf Partnership, there is the voluntary and community sector representatives, Jersey Disability Partnership, and the thing is we currently feel there needs to be a review of the makeup and how it works because it was established 18 months, 2 years ago, that sort of time. We feel that we need to focus it a bit more on the way it operates. What we do is those people from those organisations they come and speak to us and we call in officers from various departments so they can hear the concerns, or praise sometimes, about the various services. So I think ... we genuinely feel ... because we get different things come to us. Sometimes some of the service users who are also representatives of organisations come with different ideas. Some are quite focused about the big picture and others come with individual circumstances, so it is very difficult at the present time to get a good focus on the way the meetings are progressed that we would like to bring that together somehow.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Does it have a specific remit that involves policy or strategy?

Assistant Chief Minister:

No, it is about listening to people's areas of concern and that is what is ... the Service Users Forum to tell Government what they thought about the services. If we were able to ... there has been some times when we have managed to get the officers who are related to those services to hear those concerns and we have been able to address them and we have been able to resolve the issues for those particular things. But as far as ... because you have to realise the Chief Minister's Department does not have direct control over the service providers in Health and Social Services and Social Security. It is a matter of pulling all those things together.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Could I just ask: you say it is very early days in the development of the disability strategy; why did you focus on disability for a strategy? Why not some other aspect of health? Were there particular concerns about we are not dealing well with disability or what?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I think there needs to be a recognition that we could be doing a lot better for ensuring that we have got services for people with disabilities. I think there will always be a need for ... I have been involved with campaigning for disabilities for 30-odd years and there will always be room for improvement. It will never change. That will always be the case and we will always want to provide better services.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Was there anything in particular that brought that to the surface, to the top of the priorities list?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Not that I can think of.

Assistant Director of Social Policy, Chief Minister's Department:

Perhaps if I could provide a bit of background information. One of the unique features of disability, whether that be a physical disability or that be someone with a mental health problem, is that the services and support that they require to live within our community cuts across the responsibilities of virtually every single States department. One of the things that was becoming increasingly clear partly through what was being said at the Service User Forum was that we needed to be much better at taking a co-ordinated approach to how as we as an Island responded collectively to some of the challenges that disabled people face. So it is not purely a health issue. It is not necessarily

about the health services they receive. It is not necessarily just about the respite services they receive. It is also about what Social Security does, not just in terms of benefits but how it supports people with a disability back to work. It is also in terms particularly of what T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) do in terms of bus service provision, pavements, et cetera. So if we are to make our community, and our Island, a friendlier Island and community for people with disabilities, long-term health conditions or impairments, we need to think across the board, across all departmental responsibilities. It was quite clear from the work that we were doing and from the issues that were being raised at the Service User Forum that actually we needed to get the relevant officers and the relevant politicians from all departments involved. There was little point in T.T.S. having conversations with LibertyBus in isolation from a broader understanding of some of the challenges that prevent people using public transport, which is not just about physical infrastructure. It can be about fear, it can be about anxiety. So the disability strategy came from the bubbling concerns that were being expressed in the Service User Forum.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Have you got a timeline for the disability strategy of implementation?

Assistant Director of Social Policy, Chief Minister's Department:

As Senator Routier said, at the moment we are developing a disability survey, which is the starting point, because we need to understand more about disability on the Island. So the plan is that we will be doing a postal survey which will go out to households shortly after the Easter holidays. The postal survey will then be followed up in the late summer, early autumn by some focus group work because obviously the postal survey gives us a snapshot of issues and challenges that people face. We will then do focus group work to get under the skin of what some of those issues and challenges are. We are hoping, based on those findings then, we will then start doing some consultation work with people in the community saying: "This is what we found out through our research. We think this is what has been said to us. Do you agree or disagree with that? What do you think some of the priorities are?" So we are hoping that we will start consultation on the development of the actual strategy based on the information we find from the research phase, probably towards the beginning of the last quarter of 2015, and we are hoping that we will have a full strategy by the end of 2016 at the very latest.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

I am just curious because we are going to be in the throes of working up the Medium-Term Financial Plan in a couple of months' time and you are just saying that the strategy probably will not be ready until the end of next year 2016. How are you going to ... there are obviously shortfalls. We are all aware of these shortfalls at the moment. How are you going to feed that in

to Medium-Term Financial Plan or is it going to be a case that it is going to miss out basically because it is not going to be in there?

Assistant Chief Minister:

As you say, there are some things we know there are shortfalls on and I think there are departments who are already aware of that and they know that they need to put into the Medium-Term Financial Plan those particular things that we are currently aware of and we have got to make sure that it does go in.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

What sort of things would those be?

Assistant Chief Minister:

You are focusing on respite at the present time and without having the disability strategy completed, and all the rest of it, I would probably share your views that there is a shortage of respite within the Island. So I think the Health Department and the long-term care scheme that needs to fund the respite provision, they are gearing up for that, I am pretty sure they are, but we need to make sure that ... in fact the long-term health, this is an issue which actually does need to be resolved, I will touch upon, is the funding through the long-term health scheme. So that is not something that needs to be considered in with the Medium-Term Financial Plan because that is funded ... because it is funded separately. But I think what the issue is, is for how people who want to access respite services, how they are clear about how they get the funding to buy their own respite services. I think there is a big piece of work which currently needs to happen so that people who want to access the respite know how to go about accessing the long-term care fund. That is something that needs to happen.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

You said that there was a big piece of work that needs to be done, so are you saying that Health have got that big of piece of work?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Because it is a Social Security funding mechanism it needs to be better understood by the community who are going to access it, how they go about that. There is an issue with regard to assessments as well. Assessments of each individual. If they are going to access the long-term fund each person needs to be assessed by a Health social worker.

[11:15]

There needs to be focus on achieving that as quickly as possible for each person.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

In the future if respite is allocated through the long-term health scheme, do you see that it is going to be more difficult for some families to access respite care?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I cannot really comment on that. I mean it is something to be wary of, I suppose. But I do not think there is any intention that people who need to have access to respite should have those problems but when practice ... the proof will be when it comes about. But I am currently aware there are some concerns about getting assessments done in a timely manner.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

I understand there is a 10-week waiting list in getting assessments done for long-term care. Do you think that in the future is it the policy of the Council of Ministers to move the focus away from respite being provided by government departments to the private sector?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I do not think there is a policy as such. I think it is whoever can provide the service to the best ability. I mean my background is from the community in providing respite services so it could well be that the voluntary community sector can provide the services. I think that could be all well and good.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

But is that not Health Department policy? That we commissioned something like 20 companies who are qualified ... approved service providers to give service. Surely that is the policy that we are engaged on, is it not?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes, that is what is happening. I mean certainly but I am not sure whether ... I have lost track of whether Health themselves are still providing any services themselves.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

One of the reasons I asked that question was because there seemed to be some agreement that a house was going to be provided at Les Squez by Andium Homes to provide adult respite. According to the minutes from the group that you chair in September last year it had been reported that a bespoke building for respite services was no longer being considered. I was going to ask you: can you recollect that meeting and when that was discussed?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I can remember certainly the comments of the minutes when it was discussed. From my understanding it appeared to be that service users were ... there seemed to be a misunderstanding between the service users and the department about what was being required because I think there were some close ... there were regular meetings between the service users and Health at the time. Somehow things went amiss there and I never got to the bottom of what it was but certainly there seemed to be a misunderstanding between both parties.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

It would seem now that 6 months on, and as far as we're aware the parents are very keen and people who have made submissions to our inquiry were very keen to see an additional adult respite centre being provided, especially one that was completely disabled friendly. So 6 months down the line it would seem that we are in the position that you have only got 2 beds available Island-wide that are fully disabled friendly, so we are in a pretty bad situation at the moment. I was wondering how much, as chair of that group, that you are involved in trying to progress this and push this ahead because it would seem obvious to us that it is something that is desperately needed.

Assistant Chief Minister:

What the purpose of that group is, is to get the feedback from the department, and that is what happened from the service users, and for it to be fed back to the department. We are there to make sure that interchange of information happens and that highlighted the issue. It will be for the Health Department to make their decision about how they go about ensuring that there are additional service provisions. But I think part of the thinking was that perhaps if people were going to be having access to the long-term care fund they would go out and get the respite wherever they felt it ...

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

That is why I come back to the point I made earlier about was it government policy to move away from providing services and for the services to be provided by the private sector? That is why I made that point earlier. It would seem that you probably just confirmed that.

Assistant Chief Minister:

It may well be that. At that stage, but whether there is a rethink ...

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

But even if that was the view, I mean just before that meeting respite was being provided by Highlands and a care home I think at the top of Wellington Road, and then that had ceased. I

think they were providing 4 places. So suddenly we are down on 4 places and the service users group would surely have known at that time there was not anywhere else to go. So the department was providing respite, was providing 4 beds and suddenly there was nothing. Was that not a concern? Why was that not taken further and investigated?

Assistant Chief Minister:

We discussed it certainly. But I will go back to the issue about our meeting as a sounding board for these issues. The Service Users Forum is just that, it is just a discussion ... it is just a discussion to clear all these things and the Health Department are the ones and the Social Security Department are the ones who need to react to that. We are there to make sure these things are heard.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

It is a wonder it did not ring alarm bells that all of a sudden there was no provision because the Cheshire Home bed that now exists I think was probably just ... they were in talks with Cheshire Home but it was not at that time set up and ready to go. I think the Les Amis bed, which is available at Mourant Lodge, was probably not there then.

Assistant Chief Minister:

That took a long time to get that approved.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

So it is surprising that these families are suddenly left in the lurch, it seems to me. An assumption was made that they would find something within the market but there was nothing there for them to go out and access.

Assistant Chief Minister:

I was disappointed, as you are, and concerned about it as well. Certainly I think we need to put as much pressure on as we can to ensure that these services are there.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Do you feel that is part of your role as chair of the Service Users Group, that you are aware of that issue and it is incumbent on you as being Assistant Minister in the Chief Minister's Department to apply some of that pressure on the Health Department?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes, certainly.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

And have you done that since?

Assistant Chief Minister:

We have discussed this on a regular basis. It is a matter of ...

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

With the Health Department?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Internally we discussed it. But they were part of the meeting.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Within the Chief Minister's Department?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Well ...

Assistant Director of Social Policy, Chief Minister's Department:

Yes.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

The question was pressure on Health to deliver.

Assistant Chief Minister:

You know how the system works as well as I do about ...

Deputy G.P. Southern:

No, I do not, I have never been Minister.

Assistant Chief Minister:

The Chief Minister's Department does not have the power to tell the Social Security Department or the Health Department what to do but we can put pressure on them.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will it in the future, in the sense that you are in charge of developing a disability strategy? How will that work? Will there be an overarching strategy that has some control or a budget or will it be the usual please co-operate between departments and let us hope for the best and cross our fingers?

Assistant Director of Social Policy, Chief Minister's Department:

I think if we go back to why we are doing this piece of work on the disability strategy. We are doing this piece of work on the disability strategy because there are a range of issues, such as respite, but not just respite, that come up. There is a range of competing issues and competing challenges. One of the reasons for doing the disability strategy is to understand the extent of those issues and those challenges because it is the case that there are some issues that get more air time because they are articulated by people who speak louder and speaker harder. What we want to do with the disability strategy, and this is the reason why it is going to 10,000 households - it is a big piece of survey work - is we want to make sure that we are hearing from a broader base of people about what some of their issues and challenges may be. To then develop a strategy that says these are the areas that were raised, and in response to the levels of concerns expressed across a broader base of the community this is how we think we should progress, with prioritising the resources that we have. That will be done in collaboration with the departments and with the agreements of the departments. It does not mean that the Chief Minister's Department will suddenly have a magic pot of money and be able to say: "We, through the work we have done on the strategy, say that respite care is really important or access to work support is really important or redesign of pavements is really important and we have got the money to give you to do this." But it does allow us to work across the board with departments to identify what the killer issues are for people with a disability across the board and then prioritise funding.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

So what will change between now and then? We are just told here that we do not control, we cannot say what is going to happen. What will happen then? Will there be a difference or will it be more of the same?

Assistant Chief Minister:

If you think about the Island's Strategic Plan, it comes forward from the Council of Ministers and it is anticipated the whole of the States and the Island expect all departments to work to that Strategic Plan. There will be a strategic disability plan, which will be brought forward, which everybody will be expected to work to. That is what will happen.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Okay, more of the same then I will take that as. One of the witnesses that we met involved talking about respite, in particular, said that the transition from being a young person to being an adult is like falling off a cliff in that there is a big difference between the resources and the availability of all sorts of facilities as under 18, and you get to 18 and it seems to disappear. How do you have that reported to you in your conversations with users?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I have known that from being a service provider for children's respite myself. I have been involved with Mencap and Les Amis. I know that is a big issue. It is something we need to resolve. It is the same with education as well when a person ... the transition from secondary education to further education is a very, very difficult time because there are different service provisions. It is something that needs to be addressed.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Is it being addressed within the Service Users Forum how to improve this?

Assistant Chief Minister:

It has been raised as an issue and ... I cannot deny it is an issue which has got to be addressed by the department. They know that.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Can I ask a question to the Senator? In the minutes, April 2014, there was a discussion around Le Geyt Centre: "It was reported to the media that the centre was becoming run down with a lack of facilities." I understand a senior officer was reported to be currently working with Jersey Property Holdings to identify opportunities for new locations. Are you aware of what progress has been made on that actual plan?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I have not had an update since that was there because my understanding from the users was they were concerned about how it was going to ... the focus of the centre was going to change. Not necessarily about the structure of the building, but it is more about the service provision, who was going to have access to it.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

I think the vision, as far as Le Geyt Centre was concerned, is for smaller bespoke premises to be provided around the Island as hubs and for the actual Le Geyt building, and it was reported then to become an autism centre and learning disability services to move to a smaller community site. But I cannot find anywhere in the minutes, that was in April 2014, of any update on that, and that is why I wanted ...

Assistant Chief Minister:

There has been no progress on that, from the department as well. Not that I am aware of.

[11:30]

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Are you aware of why no progress has been made?

Assistant Chief Minister:

No, I am not, no.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

And it has not been discussed since then because it was supposed to be ... a senior officer from Health was supposed to report back at the next meeting and so it just seems to have all ...

Assistant Chief Minister:

I spoke earlier ...

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Almost a year later nothing has happened.

Assistant Chief Minister:

I spoke earlier about the need to refocus the Service Users Forum and how it operates. There is a need for us to ensure that the right people are attending the meeting, whether it be service users or representatives of organisations and also includes officers as well, that we have the right appropriate officers attending. The Service Users Forum was an initiative which was set up as a desire to hear people's views. It has ebbed and flowed about the people who have attended, but different people have attended and I continue it because I want to continue it, because I want to hear people's views. It would be quite easy to say the wrong people are coming and we should back away from it and it not exist, which I do not want that to happen because I want to be able to hear people's views. That is why it is there. I want it to continue and we need to encourage a good membership and for the appropriate officers to be there at the right time because sometimes we have met and we have had officers who are high level officers attending and the discussion points that have been brought up have been very individual, personal matters which have not been appropriate. It is a users' forum but we have got to get the meeting working properly. That is a piece of work we need to do.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Would it not be more effective if the users' forum was sitting within the Social Services Department? It would be more direct to the people that are providing the service.

Assistant Chief Minister:

There may be a need to have that but this is really an opportunity ... let me think back. Some of the people who have wanted to have this users forum, who approached us to have this, have probably tried those avenues before and have wanted to have sort of somebody else to go to, to express their views. I certainly was not going to deny that at all. The door was open and I wanted to hear these things. It is a matter of ... the job that I have is trying to pull people to do things in the right way and sometimes there is success and sometimes it is a little bit harder.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Where in particular have we had success? Is there anything that springs to mind?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes, the bus contract. We did really good with the bus contract. We have got ... currently there is a new ConnectCard for people who want to have a card to explain what their difficulties are in the community. They all have a card which they can show getting on to a bus or going into a service and sort of saying: "I have a problem with hearing" or: "I have a problem with sight", whatever their issue is. That is going to be launched very soon. We have had other things as well. I am trying to remember them.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

You said bus contract. What was that?

Assistant Director of Social Policy, Chief Minister's Department:

I think there are a number of things where the Service User Forum has operated effectively, albeit I think there are other ways in which it has not. So there is the ConnectCard that Senator Routier spoke about. Through the Service User Forum we have done quite a lot of work with LibertyBus and through the Service User Forum we did some very small focus groups last year specifically around transport to use of buses in partnership with LibertyBus, and as a result of that some of the voluntary and community sector organisations are going in and providing LibertyBus drivers training on the challenges that their service user faces. So what happens to an autistic person, what does it feel like if you have autism and you get on to a bus? We are creating ... we use the Service User Forum to create connections into LibertyBus to help LibertyBus deliver on their very clear and heartfelt commitment to being a proper community transport system. Also through concerns that were raised at the Service User Forum we put people in contact with Social Security and Social Security are involving some of the members of the Service User Forum in the redesign of some of their forms that have caused particular problems. I think it is really important to be clear about what the Service User Forum is and is not. It is a way of bringing people together so they can express their concerns and it is a way of us creating links between those individuals and

between relevant officers and relevant departments because those individuals often do not know where to go or they feel frustrated because they have tried to get there and they have not managed. It does work in some places. It does not work in other places. We are concerned that the Service User Forum has the potential to muddy the waters even more because services users will go there and think: "If I say this is a problem for me Senator Routier and the Chief Minister's Department will magically resolve this." We are not in a position to do that. That is the reason why Senator Routier said at the outset we need to go back to basics and review everybody's understanding of what that forum is there to do because it is limited in what it does.

Assistant Chief Minister:

If the Service Users Forum thought there was no value in it that is for them to decide but if they want to meet with me and discuss these things and try and pull departments together to hear these things I am happy to do that.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

So is the Service Users Forum the only group that is currently in operation at the moment that you are speaking to? Is the Jersey Disability Partnership one?

Assistant Director of Social Policy, Chief Minister's Department:

Yes. Yes, I mean the Service User Forum kind of belongs to the States of Jersey, as such, but the Jersey Disability Partnership was set up by a group of organisations, voluntary and community sector organisations and it is run by Jim Hopley but it is different from the Jersey Voluntary and Community Sector Partnership which obviously is of course the gamut of organisations. The Jersey Disability Partnership provides an opportunity for community sector organisations working in the area of disability to share their concerns. A lot of the information and feedback we get at the Service User Forum comes from that broader disability fora, so we do not just hear the voices of the 15, 20 people sitting round the table in the Service User Forum. It is broader than that.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

So the Jersey Disability Partnership always feed into your Service Users group?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Can you just tell me the Joint Secretariat, that is disbanded now, is that correct?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes, it is ...

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

What was that exactly?

Assistant Chief Minister:

My past history coming out now. About 20 years ago ... no, in fact it was further than that, it was probably about 25 years ago the Health Department kept on getting bombarded by the chairman and president of Mencap for various services and they thought the best way to try and calm him down was to invite that person to be joint chair of the Joint Secretariat for people with learning disabilities, which was me.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

So it was an organisation between yourself and the States of Jersey at the time?

Assistant Chief Minister:

And the States of Jersey, yes, so it was Ian Berry was the joint chair, and we used to meet on a regular basis to ...

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

But that disbanded last year?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Because the Service Users Forum took it place?

Assistant Director of Social Policy, Chief Minister's Department:

Yes.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Yes.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Can I just ask the Minister what attempt has been made to protect disability budgets from the most recent round of cuts, in particular 2 per cent which has been imposed on budgets?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I have no evidence of that.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

There has not been any budget cuts?

Assistant Chief Minister:

What in particular are you talking about? Anything in particular?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

In particular, I am wondering whether there has been any particular protection put into budgets about services for the disabled to protect them from cuts. Every department has got to by 2 per cent.

Assistant Chief Minister:

I have had no direct input into that. I mean the Social Security Department will have their own general budget which they will be allocating as they see. I hope that they will ensure that people who are in financial need, who have a disability, are protected.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

We heard from J.E.T. (Jersey Employment Trust) recently that their work had been curtailed. They were about to appoint 3 new posts for a service which was expanding and received the 2 per cent cut at the last minute and therefore were unable to proceed and in fact scrambled around to see if they could find some more funding. Were you aware of that at all?

Assistant Chief Minister:

No, I have not heard of that.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Do you have views on it, the Employment Trust is not able to progress its work and they tell us they have increasing numbers coming to them, yet their budget is reducing?

Assistant Chief Minister:

I would hope that they are able to do the work that they need to do because we know that there are people with disabilities who can be working with assistance and if they can be supported through the Jersey Employment Trust that has got to be the right thing to do. I would hope that they are able to continue to provide the service that they need to do. I have got no direct knowledge of what they are being asked to do in the way of cuts, but certainly it is one ... I was

involved in the very early days of setting it up so I hope that they will still be able to continue the work that they have been doing exceptionally well and they will continue to be able to do that.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes, indeed. Now there is just 3 minutes I think before you need to leave, Senator Routier, so has the panel got any questions.

Deputy T.A. McDonald:

Can I just ask one question? What is your view on the need for an adult Oakwell? We have heard a lot of discussion about this. What is your own feeling?

Assistant Chief Minister:

Certainly there is a need for adult respite services. I do not believe that the current 2 rooms that are available are sufficient. I would hope that we can establish a service which is ... whether it be all in one building or be in separate buildings or whatever, that might be open to negotiation. But certainly I know that respite is vitally important for people to continue to live within our community and we should, if it requires another house, and that is the way to do it, I would be fully behind that and support that.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

And try and ensure that funding is made available so that can be provided.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Certainly. As I touched on before, the long-term care fund is due to fund respite and we need to ensure that people know how to access it and the assessments are done as quickly as possible.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Can I just come in with a final one? We heard in the recent elections there was a movement ... a lot of candidates saying that they would support free bus passes for the disabled. What is your own take on that?

Assistant Chief Minister:

There is a piece of work going on with regard to access to transport within the Island, which the department are doing that. It is not only ... there are so many things related about the free bus passes for everybody and how that all works together. There is a big piece of work going on to ensure that people who have disabilities can access transport. But the final outcome of that will be is ... it is in the melting pot at the present time.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Who is leading that? Is it Health?

Assistant Director of Social Policy, Chief Minister's Department:

No, we are leading it for the Chief Minister's Department. We have got a working group that involves the Social Security Department and the Transport and Technical Services Department. The Health Department are not involved at this stage. Whether we look at the criteria used to assess whether or not someone would or would not be entitled to a disabled bus pass then the Health Department will be involved at that stage. But at the moment the issues we are focusing on are around the viability of introducing such a scheme and the associated cost of introducing such a scheme. We are doing a piece of work at the moment which is looking across the world and other jurisdictions around how they manage the provision of free travel for people on criteria other than criteria related to their age.

[11:45]

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Okay, so that brings us to the end of our time unless you have got something you want to add, Senator Routier.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Other than if there is anything else I can help you with through email or whatever, please do not hesitate.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Thank you for that offer.

Assistant Chief Minister:

Very happy to.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Thank you for coming to speak to us about this.

Assistant Chief Minister:

I wish you well with your work.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Thank you.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:
Thank you very much.