

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY SENATOR S.C. FERGUSON
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 17th NOVEMBER 2009**

Question

Would the Health Minister explain exactly what she is doing to address the problem in recruiting and retaining middle grade doctors, on whom emergency service provision and patient safety are reliant, given that of the 46 posts in the major departments, 7 are either filled by locums, or are completely vacant?

Answer

At present it is important to note that there are no unfilled middle grade positions locally. All middle grade posts are either filled by a substantive appointment or a locum doctor.

Background

Middle grade doctors (e.g. Registrars, Staff Grades and Associate Specialists) work as part of a multidisciplinary team to deliver clinical services where they support Consultants and are themselves supported by Junior Doctors. They also work closely with nursing, diagnostic and therapy staff.

Currently there is a shortage of middle grade doctors, due to regulatory changes in the way middle grades doctors are trained and employed in the United Kingdom, in particular the need for Trusts to comply with the lowering of the working week from approximately 56 hours to 48 per week demanded by the European Working Time Directive. The British Medical Association reported that junior doctor staffing rotas were short by 3000 doctors at the end of 2008.

Current Position

As far as the positions covered by locum middle grade doctors are concerned, the reasons behind these temporary measures can be broken down into the following:-

- Three are covering long term absences;
- Two are covering shortages in the normal allocation of Registrars (on rotation) from the Wessex Deanery;
- One covering a post until the substantive appointment can take up position in April 2010;
- One covering a post converted from a junior doctor position; and,
- One covering a vacant middle grade post where the Department is out to advert for the second time;

Action Taken

In order to address this situation the Department is pursuing a number of initiatives as follows:-

- Seeking to employ suitably experienced and qualified middle grade staff from outside of the UK as well as the traditional UK market. The Department is also using specialist recruitment agencies as well as the normal recruitment channels to try and fill current vacancies;
- Where appropriate, seeking to recruit other grades of staff. For example, subject to the agreement of the business case, the Department will be seeking to employ another Consultant Gastroenterologist rather than employ another middle grade member of staff;

- After many years of negotiation, a new grade/salary structure and contract for middle grade doctors was introduced in the UK with effect April 2008. In its attempt to secure the recruitment and retention of middle grade staff to meet its needs, the Department, via the Local Negotiating Committee (LNC) is currently in the process of developing a Jersey version of the UK Agreement. This will be discussed at the LNC meeting on 18 November 2009. It is anticipated that the local negotiations will be completed within the first quarter of 2010.