

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 30th JUNE 2009**

Question

Will the Minister inform members how many positions, and at what levels, are unfilled in the full complement of -

- a) Hospital nurses
- b) Social workers

What measures, if any, does the Minister have in place to remedy the position?

Answer

My answer to the Deputy naturally falls into two parts.

(a) Hospital Nurses

In providing the information to the Deputy, I have included in the figures those health practitioners who are called 'Health Care Assistants'. This group of valuable practitioners is included within the Nurses and Midwives pay group.

As at 23rd June 2009, there are 54.99 FTE (Full Time Equivalent). This equates to 5.39% of the total Registered Nurse and HCA workforce.

As to remedial measures, I can advise the Deputy that 10 Registered Nurses have been appointed, but we are awaiting a starting date for them, which of course is subject to Police checks and health clearance.

Further remedial actions which are intended to improve the recruitment and retention of our Nursing and Midwifery workforce include:

- Development of relocation package for Nurses and Midwives equitable to packages available to other pay groups
- A 'Hard to Recruit Area' policy developed locally that enables some negotiation for staff to relocate on an increment higher than the usual bottom increment of grade within the agreed States of Jersey Nurses and Midwives career framework. A more assertive approach is now taken to market Jersey and to identify Senior Nurse Managers as contact points so that those who are thinking of relocating to Jersey 'have a friend on the phone' here in Jersey, so to speak.
- As has been well publicised, a range of 'grow our own nurses initiatives' have been put in place. These imaginative schemes seek to give career opportunities to indigenous Islanders and thereby reduce the reliance on recruiting nurses from other jurisdictions.
- A radical overhaul of recruitment and other administrative procedures is underway aimed at streamlining and thereby reducing the gap between vacancy and a new nurse coming into post. The new vetting arrangements which are undertaken by the States of Jersey Police are being refashioned and should reduce the waiting time in this regard.

(b) Social Workers

I am very pleased to report that with regard to Social Services, the number of vacancies within social work has reduced considerably over recent months. The following table best describes the picture, given the various specialisms within social work itself. The vacancies should be seen in the context of there being 58 substantive posts in social work.

Table 1

Service Area	Number & nature of post/s	Action
Adult Social Work	2.5 Social Work posts	Posts have been advertised. Interviews mid July.
Children's Executive Service	1 Residential/Secure Officer in Charge post	Due to be advertised in September
Children's Service: Assessment and Child Protection	2 Social Work posts	Post offered, awaiting completion of police checks
Children's Service: Special Needs	1 Social Work post	Recruitment nearing completion, successful candidate in post in 2/3 months.

Whilst the vacancy position has improved, there is no room for complacency and we must always be vigilant. It is well known that there is a dearth of Registered Social Workers within the United Kingdom – which remains the principal source of all our Social Worker recruitment in Jersey.

Clearly long term solutions are required to address this problem, which threatens to erode the capacity of the service to deliver its core statutory services. Measures continue to be put in place with the aim of improving recruitment and, crucially, ensuring that once recruited, staff are retained in post. These remedial measures include:

- Re-evaluation of remuneration levels for all Registered Social Workers – which reflects the level of autonomy and decision making which Social Workers are accountable for now in the modern world.
- The Directorate of Social Services uses a portion of its training budget each year to support and financially sponsor up to four indigenous Islanders to undertake the Open University Social Work Degree. Again, this is another example of Jersey 'growing its own'.
- If the States supports the Williamson Implementation Plan, then additional training funds – and other supportive resources – will be available which will improve the quality and wellbeing of existing Social Workers. It is well recognised that a Department of Social Services which is undergoing a huge and positive investment in itself attracts social workers to come and to take up roles within a service which is recognised as being on a path of improvement with resources available to back this up.