

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY DEPUTY R.G. LE HERISSIER OF ST. SAVIOUR**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 28th MARCH 2006

Question

Will the Minister give the date, if any, upon which procedures for independent investigation of complaints will come into effect?

Answer

The former Health and Social Services Committee agreed to introduce a complaints policy in 1992 which has been effective since 1993. The Health and Social Services Department has reported annually on its number and nature of complaints since 1996. But it was only in 2004 that a dedicated complaints coordinator was introduced to the service so that a formal complaints procedure could be implemented. This has meant that patients, relatives and carers now have clear access to procedures to register formal complaints and feedback on the quality of services. The Department values the contribution that these complaints make to continuously improving services for patients and clients.

The reality of the situation is that the number of complaints that the Department receives is very low. In 2005 it received 154 complaints for all Health and Social Services areas. When one considers that the General Hospital alone dealt with over 170,000 attendances last year, (actual 174,727 - in patient, out patient, day cases and A&E attendances), that represents less than one complaint for every 1000 patient interactions. This figure becomes even lower when one includes all the activities and attendances for Social Services, Overdale and St Saviour sites.

The Department has just received an independent survey of patient satisfaction at the Jersey General Hospital by the Picker Institute in March 2006. It reveals high levels of satisfaction with the services provided with 96% of respondents reporting that the care they received is good, very good, or excellent. However, just under 20% of respondents reported that they didn't know how to make a formal complaint. Although this performance is better than the U.K. average, we still need to work to ensure that our patients know how to make a complaint. The Picker Institute independently carries out such assessment of all NHS Trusts in the U.K., and benchmarked to their performance, the Jersey General Hospital scored above U.K. average in overall performance across all domains.

We must be aware, however, that Jersey's Health and Social Care service is, largely speaking, a single provider for the people of Jersey. In terms of investigating complaints, one could argue that the Department can act as judge and jury. We must be confident that service users receive a fair response when they make a complaint and we must be assured that the Department acts appropriately on any concerns, and, where appropriate, makes changes to ensure improvements in service delivery.

To ensure that standards are independently inspected, the Department is in discussion with the Healthcare Commission to carry out an independent inspection of Health and Social Services in Jersey in 2007. The Healthcare Commission carry out all such inspections for NHS Trusts and independent healthcare providers in the U.K. They also act as the second stage independent complaints investigation for all of these U.K. providers. Senior Officers from HSSD will be meeting with representatives from the Healthcare Commission in early May 2006 to invite the Commission to provide this function for the States of Jersey's Health and Social Services Department. Such a process of second stage independent investigation of complaints may include the setting up of a local independent panel, guided by a case manager provided by the Healthcare Commission who would be brought in specifically to manage complaints. Although timescales, costs and consultation, both internal and external, are yet to be finalised, the Chief Officer will shortly establish a small, clinically led working group to move this objective forward and it is anticipated that such a system could be in place by the end of 2006.