

5.5 Senator S.C. Ferguson of the Assistant Minister for Health and Social Services regarding middle grade doctors' posts at the Hospital:

I would ask the Minister how many middle grade doctors posts exist at the hospital, how many are vacant or filled by locums, how many adhere to the 48-hour European Working Time Directive?

The Bailiff:

Assistant Minister, I understand you are going to answer this one, is that right?

Deputy E.J. Noel of St. Lawrence (Assistant Minister for Health and Social Services - rapporteur):

There are currently 57 full-time middle grade posts in the General Hospital. Of these 7 are established posts which are currently vacant and 2 are new posts which have not yet been recruited to. Of these 9 vacant posts 5 have been offered and the department is currently awaiting confirmation of starting dates; 3 are vacant but the department have action plans in place to resolve those, and one is being currently covered by existing staff. I am advised that none of these posts are required to comply with the European Working Time Directive.

5.5.1 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

I wonder if the Assistant Minister would confirm again those doctors whose work patterns do not adhere to the European Working Time Directive, and would he also say how many hours are worked each week, and if he does not have the figures will he research this and return to the House with the details.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I can add some clarity to those doctors that do work within the European Working Time Directive and those are the trainees that are employed by the Wessex Deanery; all other staff members are employed by the States Employment Board and do not have to comply with the European Working Time Directive but have to comply with Jersey company law. As to the average amount of hours that those individuals work, I will have to get that information and get it back to the Senator.

5.5.2 The Deputy of St. John:

How many current doctors are on restricted practice duties because of disciplinary procedures?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I do not see how that relates to this particular question but there is a question later on in question time that deals with that matter.

5.5.3 Deputy F.J. Hill of St. Martin:

Could the Assistant Minister inform Members why there are so many vacancies, and what is the cause for this? This is the number of vacancies on par maybe with other national health services?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

There are many reasons why we have 9 such vacancies at the moment. One is there are recruitment issues. We are taking steps to try to reduce that number and, as I said, we have offers in place to 5 out of those 9, and we are in a competitive world and

currently we have to up our game in the terms and conditions that we offer our doctors, and that is something that we are taking active steps to resolve.

5.5.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Assistant Minister not accept that current practice is discriminatory and that if he is referring to competition to attract middle grade doctors to our shores, then he should consider applying the European Union Directive in order to do so?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

No, we should be doing the opposite and for 2 good reasons. The E.W.T.D. (European Working Time Directive) has a significant impact on the training of middle grade doctors. Research is coming out from the British Medical Association that it looks like those doctors following the E.W.T.D. do not have enough time to learn on the job. If we did comply with the European Directive then we would need a significant additional number of doctors and therefore we would not have a shortage of 9, we would have a far greater shortage.

[12:00]

5.5.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Assistant Minister not accept that the increased workload which will be imposed on middle grade doctors in Jersey is a factor in stopping doctors coming to Jersey?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

No, 2 of the main factors for Jersey not being as attractive maybe as we would like it to be are:(1) it is because the cost of living in Jersey is higher than many other regions in the U.K.; but (2) secondly, and more importantly, our hospital and the population is simply not big enough to provide those doctors with the appropriate experiences that they require, and medicine is becoming more and more specialised and doctors are seeking posts in other teaching hospitals, other than ours.

5.5.6 Deputy A.E. Jeune:

I do not think Jersey comes under the teaching hospital rules. However, my question to the Assistant Minister is I am trying to work out my sums from what he said at the beginning of his answer to the question. He said there were 9 posts, 5 were offered, 3 are still vacant and one is being covered by an existing member of staff. It is that one covered by the existing member of staff; does that mean that somebody is doing 2 jobs? Perhaps he could clarify.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I have not got that information and I will get it for the Deputy.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I do not need to ask my question now.

The Bailiff:

Thank you. Do you wish a final question, Senator Ferguson?

5.5.7 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Yes, Sir. We have 3 middle grades on restricted work. Where does this figure fit within this 57 middle grade, 5 vacancies, *et cetera*, but how are these 3 posts being covered?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

Again, I do not see that as relevant to the original question, but the posts that we currently have on restricted duties are being covered by locums.

5.5.8 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

With respect, a supplementary. The Assistant Minister has not mentioned 3 locums. He has talked about 5 vacancies awaiting a starting date.

The Bailiff:

The question, Senator, does not relate to those who are on restricted duties, that is why. Now, let us turn to a question which is relevant. Deputy Southern, do you want to ask a question of the Minister for Treasury and Resources?