

STATES OF JERSEY



VALERIE BAND HOUSE: THERAPEUTIC WORKSHOP (P.80/2011) – COMMENTS

Presented to the States on 20th June 2011
by the Minister for Health and Social Services

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

I urge Members to reject this proposition for the following reasons:

The furniture project at Valerie Band House is a long-term sheltered work scheme. Since 1996 it has offered clients of the States' Occupational Therapy (OT) service an opportunity to engage in a therapeutic activity – the manufacture and repair of wood products and furniture.

When the furniture project was originally set up in 1996 it was typical of many OT projects of that time, but things have progressed since then and there is now a strong evidence base showing that sheltered work projects like the Valerie Band House furniture project can have a detrimental effect. The long-term nature of the projects creates dependence, rather than independence, and fosters a belief amongst clients that they are not capable of doing other things.

The decision to close Valerie Band House is therefore not simply about CSR targets or money (it delivers £17k saving) – it is about ensuring better longer-term outcomes for clients.

At the moment, 7 clients are engaged in the Valerie Band project. Some have been there since 1996, having not progressed into open supported employment or volunteering opportunities. When they were first referred, most were users of HSSD mental health services, but none currently require such specialist services.

The clients are not staff and are not paid a wage, but they are provided a nominal allowance of £2.30 per hour for each hour they spend at Valerie Band House.

The clients are understandably anxious about the change and HSSD is working hard to support them. We have staggered the closure process, reducing the number of weekly sessions from 5 to 3 in order to ensure a more gradual managed change. In addition, our trained, professional staff have been meeting the clients on a one-to-one basis for a number of months, taking them to visit other projects and organisations that can offer more progressive, alternative occupational schemes such as Tools for Self-Reliance, Durrell and JET.

Each client is at a very different stage in terms of how they feel about the change; some are finding the process daunting whilst others, with support, are taking the opportunity to get engaged in activities that will help them move forward into a different phase of life, such as Social Security's Workwise scheme.

Managing this process of change will take time as clients explore the options available to them. HSSD will continue to support each client until they are engaged and settled in an alternative activity which is more appropriate and provides them more opportunities in the longer term. The clients will remain in regular contact with our OT team with a direct interest and oversight from senior service managers. Our support will not stop when the projects closes.

The proposition calls for the closure of the Valerie Band project to be delayed until JET's new Acorn Enterprises facility opens. However, the 7 clients have already rejected an opportunity to get involved in JET's existing Acorn Enterprise activities because it is not a 'like-for-like' replacement of the Valerie Band House. JET offers short-term placements intended to prepare people for paid employment, as opposed to

long-term sheltered work, it does not pay a £2.30 allowance nor does it offer high-quality furniture restoration. This will remain the same, even when the new facility opens.

JET, who were not consulted prior to this Proposition being lodged, focus on assisting people with a disability or support need to find and sustain open employment. They recognise that Valerie Band House neither assists nor encourages people to move towards gaining meaningful paid employment. Mind Jersey also believes that Valerie Band House disadvantages clients in the long term, perpetuating social exclusion.

Mind Jersey was previously known as Focus, and prior to that it was called the Jersey Association for Mental Health. It was as the Jersey Association of Mental Health that it managed the bequest made by Valerie Band's family in the 1990s. The bequest was used to purchase some of the machines currently used in the Valerie Band workshop, as opposed to the purchase of the building. The Band family have consented to those machines being donated to another organisation that provides OT and vocational rehabilitation opportunities. HSSD is in discussions with JET, Mind Jersey and others organisations about this.

The closure of Valerie Band House delivers a £17k saving and does make a contribution to CSR, but more importantly it has the potential to deliver better longer-term outcomes for clients. The closure forms part of a wider-ranging review of the whole OT *Jobscope* scheme which provides therapeutic employment opportunities for approximately 90 clients across a range of settings.

HSSD fully acknowledges that this proposition is intended to be in the best interests of the clients. We also know that the closure of the project is very difficult for these clients, but we not accept that the proposed delay would have a beneficial effect. It would serve to undo much of the progress the clients have already made, both in practical and emotional terms, in responding to the process of change.

Valerie Band House is an example of outdated practice. It is time for it to go and time for these clients, with our ongoing support, to move onto new opportunities which offer them better longer-term outcomes.

I urge you to reject this proposition.

Statement under Standing Order 37A [Presentation of comment relating to a proposition]

I would like to apologise to the Assembly for the lateness of this comment. Due to changes in Council of Ministers meeting dates, this comment was not finalised for approval by the Minister for Health and Social Services until Friday 17th June.