

10.05.16

3.7 (9432) Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the rate of suicide amongst young men:

What action, if any, is the Minister taking to reduce the rate of suicide among young men?

Senator A.K.F. Green (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

Before I start, I would like to say that every suicide is an absolute tragedy and we must do all that we can to prevent it. Mental health is everybody's business. It is not solely the responsibility of health officers or even the Minister for Health. Cross-government voluntary sector, wider community support is essential to improve mental health and reduce vulnerability to the risk of suicide. That said, my department has taken the lead on co-ordinating a multi-agency partnership working through the mental health strategy and related prevention of suicide framework for action. A prevention of suicide framework has been developed and this is supported and endorsed by the States Corporate Management Board. It involves a collaborative approach across departments and wider agencies to address the wide range of factors that decrease the risk of suicide. Priority objective areas are: improving mental health and well-being in vulnerable groups, reducing the stigma about suicidal feelings, reducing the risk of suicide in high-risk individuals, and improving information and support to those who have been bereaved by suicide. A new programme called "Connecting with People" has been commissioned and funded jointly by the multi-agency membership of the Prevention of Suicide Steering Group. This training programme represents an up-to-date evidence-based approach to the development of skills, knowledge, attitudes to suicide mitigation in young people as well as adults.

The Bailiff:

You are coming to the end of your 90 seconds?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I am, Sir, but it is a complex subject. Earlier this year a new local bereavement resource for people who have been affected by death and suicide was also realised. Mental health strategy and the prevention of suicide framework, actions working together in synergy have impact on reducing the risk of suicide. It is not one action but a collective action together that will support us in developing a health, more resilient Island population.

The Bailiff:

Minister, you might wish to tell your officials they are 30 per cent over the time limit.

3.7.1 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I thank the Minister for his answer. Of course I agree all suicides are a concern, whatever demographic. I just wanted to press on the particular demographic of young men. Is the Minister aware of possible social factors behind this problem? In particular, that they have been highlighted by a new charity, which I mentioned to the Minister the other day, because it does seem that there is... in the health profile, from 2014, it showed there were significantly more suicides from young men. So is the Minister aware of the social factors behind why this demographic are particularly affected?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

What I am aware of is that throughout Europe young men seem to be more vulnerable. The figures I have for Jersey - and every death is unacceptable and a tragedy - but the figures I have for Jersey show that we are considerably lower than U.K. (United Kingdom) and the rest of Europe. Having said that, one is too many. Young men seem to be particularly vulnerable and the strategy that we have developed is helping to support with education, with the police, and voluntary sector, helping to support those families.

3.7.2 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Would the Minister consider an awareness campaign perhaps as part of a broader campaign which would be targeted at this demographic to help mitigate some of the social factors? The charity I mentioned is called C.A.L.M. (Campaign Against Living Miserably) and they feel that the pressure on boys and men to be strong, to be a winner, they feel they are not able to talk as much. Could the Minister target these social factors somehow with a campaign to young men feel that they can talk and they can access the services that are provided by his department?

Senator A.K.F. Green

The quick answer to that is of course, yes. I want everybody, not just young men - but young men is what we are talking about today - to be able to discuss their feelings safely to get the support that they need at the right time. Not quite the right word but for the community to empathise and sympathise when someone has a mental health issue or is suffering from stress, just in the same way as they would if somebody had a broken leg. We have the mental health strategy day tomorrow and we have the Mental Health Awareness Week next week and we will certainly look at targeting young people as the Deputy requested.