

2.10 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of St. Helier of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding fees for local mental health nurse trainees: 1(398)

In the light of the Minister's commitment to parity of treatment for mental and physical health problems, will the Minister state whether local mental health nurse trainees are charged fees when other nurse trainees are not, and if that is so will he explain why?

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Sir, before we start, I think we are not quorate at the moment.

The Deputy Bailiff:

No, we are not quorate. Could I ask Members to return to the Chamber, please? We do not appear to have an Usher. Very well, we are now quorate again. Yes, Minister? Deputy, you had asked your question; it is for the Minister to answer. Minister, yes?

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

I was just about to go into full flow and had to sit down again. Can I thank the Deputy for this really interesting question? The answer is that any nursing and midwifery training undertaken off-Island is subject to charges by the university responsible. As with all degree courses off-Island, financial support with fees, if appropriate, is available through the Education Department. Where practical, though, we do offer training on-Island, but this is very dependent on the demand, the number of students, our ability to have specialist skills for the required lecturers on the Island, and available resources.

2.10.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

I do not know if I just did not hear the answer properly, but I am not sure which part of that answered the main part of the question I was after. It was about the distinction between the support that is provided for people going into nursing to treat mental health issues, as opposed to nurses who are training to go into other specialist areas. Is there a distinction between the support that is provided, or is it equal across the board?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Sorry, I was not clear, was I? The difference is because we have sufficient registered general nursing students we can run courses on-Island. We have insufficient numbers at the current time, despite our focus on recruiting mental health nurses, to practically run a course in Jersey.

2.10.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The question must be: is the Minister for Health and Social Services prepared to commit that trainees for mental health should not pay greater fees whether at home, or elsewhere, compared with physical health trainee nurses, whether on-Island or off-Island?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I am not prepared to commit to that directly, but I am prepared to commit to looking at it. The problem is that with the registered general nurses that we train, we train them on-Island; they work on our wards and immediately they fully qualify they become staff nurses on our wards. The difficulty is that if we just fund the course in the U.K., we may never see those students back as registered mental health nurses in Jersey. I am prepared to look at whether there is something we could do better.

2.10.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister not accept that in choosing which specialism to go for, trainee nurses may look at the potential costs of that training and thereby be put off and therefore perpetuating the

need and the dearth of trainee mental health nurses that we appear to have on our Island, because that is one of the shortage areas, is it not? Does the Minister agree?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Yes, it is one of the shortage areas and that is why I said I was prepared to look at it. If we had more people coming forward to register to train as mental health nurses in Jersey, then we would run the course. We ran a course in the past, but we only get single figures, one, 2, 3 people coming forward at the moment. I think it is that that we need to change; the rest would be easy.

2.10.4 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

It sounds a bit chicken and egg to me that there is not the support provided, because people are not coming forward for it, and people are not coming forward for it, because there is no support provided for it. The Minister says that he is prepared to look at this. Does he accept that if greater incentives were provided to these people, we would see a higher take-up and that could include partial funding of courses in the U.K., or perhaps even full funding, but with that extra element which says there should be an agreement to come back and work in Jersey, so that we know that the health system here does benefit? Does he consider that that could be a potential way forward and, if not, could he give an idea of what he would see as a potential way forward to address this issue?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I am not going to try and cobble an answer together on the hoof. What I am prepared to do is to look at this. We have a good record of training; we train registered general nurses. I think we had 14 go into our system as qualified nurses last year. We have a scheme coming forward to train 12 local social workers. I just want to have a look if there is something we could do that would enable us to train mental health nurses.