

4.5 Deputy R.J. Renouf of St. Ouen of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the feasibility study examining the requirements of the Island's mental health estate: [OQ.4/2018]

Further to the answer given to oral question number 548 on 10th October 2017, will the Minister explain why there has been further delay in releasing the results of a feasibility study examining the requirements for the Island's mental health estate, despite his Assistant Minister's statement that they would be so available by the end of October?

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

At a meeting last week the H. and S.S.D. (Health and Social Services Department) corporate directors considered a report on mental health services and the estate they use. This report was based on a full feasibility study completed by Jersey Property Holdings. It is now to be presented to myself and my Assistant Minister shortly. I will then ask the officers to work with Jersey Property Holdings and Treasury to formalise the Outline Business Case.

4.5.1 The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Very interesting, but it does not answer the question. Why has there been that delay when this was promised at the end of October and there has only been a meeting this week, I think the Minister said? Is the Mental Health Service being treated as a Cinderella service? What is the Minister doing to prioritise and get this back on track?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

That is totally unfair to make that comment about Cinderella services. There have been huge investments over the years, as well the Deputy knows, of Clinique Pinel where the dementia unit was completely upgraded. There is investment in C.A.M.H.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services), which hopefully will be opening into its new premises at the end of this month or, at the very outside, the beginning of next month. But that is piecemeal work. We needed a full strategy. Full strategies take time to prepare. Property Holdings have prepared one and I will see it next week.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I first need an answer to my question relating to that.

The Deputy Bailiff:

You will have a final supplementary, Deputy, so we will come to it at that point, if that is what you wish.

4.5.2 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

The Mental Health Service has not got the... surely the Minister agrees that the Mental Health Service has not got the resources. He will recall a case I referred to him. I know we cannot talk about individual cases in the States. But I have sent a follow-up email about this particular case where treatment is not available because it appears to be lack of resources within the Mental Health setup. Surely it is a matter of urgency, to the Minister, that we get our ducks in row on this. It really is not good enough.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I am sorry, could you ask what the question is?

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Could the Minister agree that it is time we got our ducks in a row?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

We must get our ducks in a row but we must get the right ducks in a row. We must provide the right facilities for people with mental health. I am not a clinician so it is not for me to judge whether someone gets appropriate treatment or not. My role is to provide the resources and ensure that we have the right infrastructure in terms of accommodation. Jersey Property Holdings have worked very hard with my officers in producing a plan. I will see that plan next week and I will bring it forward.

4.5.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

The Minister seems to have a pedigree now of not being able to meet deadlines. At the beginning of his term he promised to solve the hospital issue within 100 days into his office. Last May he promised to give medicinal cannabis to those who needed it by the end of last year. Now we see that a promise made on mental health to deliver in October has yet to be delivered on. Is it a hallmark of this Minister's ministry to over-promise and under-deliver?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

As usual, the Deputy has distorted the words. What I promised in the election - it is a pity other people do not look at their promises and compare it - what I promised in the election, is I would review the plans for the new hospital and report back within 100 days. I reported back in just over 100 days that the plans as outlined were not appropriate. Unfortunately it has taken a bit longer to find a new site, but I reported back. With medical cannabis we are going to answer that question later. But I will not be party to window-dressing and giving a list of things that I cannot provide because borders control will not allow it to enter or is not produced safely. So we will talk about that later. With regard to the mental health estate, there has been some piecemeal development. I want a proper plan. That plan is in the throes of being developed and will be shortly.

4.5.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

As the Minister will be fully aware, resourcing of any service depends very much on staffing. Is he content that he has now achieved the right staffing ratios for the Mental Health Service in addition to the right places in which that could be delivered?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I am not. We know that we still have vacancies with mental health nurses, although the situation is slightly better. We know we still have vacancies for social workers. But that is not an active decision of this Minister or anybody else not to fill those posts. They have to be filled appropriately with the right people. But we are not fully resourced, but that is not for want of trying.

4.5.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister not agree that the requirement to fully staff any particular service is largely dependent upon the fact that you need to pay the right sum of money to recruit those people and then to retain them in an Island which is increasingly expensive to live in? With his second hat on, as a member of the S.E.B. (States Employment Board), will he advocate increasing the amounts which are paid to staff beyond the cap in order to recruit successfully?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I think a bit wider than this question. But workforce modernisation is about reflected equal value for equal pay, but the fact remains that we have difficulties recruiting and we are fishing in a very small pool in the U.K. It is a worldwide problem. We are doing quite well. I would like us to do better.

4.5.6 The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Would the Minister be precise with the Assembly and would he confirm that he will release the results of the feasibility study when he has seen it, release it to this Assembly and to the public? Will he give us a date for the completion of the business plan? If he cannot give that immediately will he undertake to give it within a short time? Can he say when this whole matter is planned to be brought to this Assembly?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Dealing with the last bit first. I need to see the plan that has been produced, that is going to be brought to me where I need to make sure I am happy with it. It needs to go to the Council of Ministers and then it will come to this Assembly. It is not possible to put a timetable on it at the moment, but it is something I regard as a priority.