

20.10.20

22 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of the Chief Minister regarding the recommendations of UNICEF dealing with the gendered challenges and risks arising from Covid-19 (OQ.285/2020):

Will the Chief Minister advise to what extent, if any, the Council of Ministers is taking into account the recommendations of U.N.I.C.E.F. (United Nations Children's Fund) for dealing with the gendered challenges and risks of COVID-19 in making policy decisions in response to the pandemic?"

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré (The Chief Minister):

It slightly broke up at the end but I will go from the oral question written. Throughout the Government response to the COVID-19 pandemic there has obviously been concern for how the most vulnerable in our community are affected by the emergency response to managing the virus. Now many of the actions that the Government has undertaken as part of its strategy are consistent with the U.N.I.C.E.F. 5 core actions for gender equality in the COVID-19 response. I am going to give you 3 examples of those 5 but obviously if the Deputy or any other Member would like to speak with officers to understand more, I would be very happy to arrange that. The 3 examples are from the first core action, care for caregivers; the third one, which is maintenance of core health and education services; and the fourth one which is engaging and assisting women and youth rights networks to support connectivity and vital information flow. Care for caregivers, obviously U.N.I.C.E.F. highlight that women are at the forefront of all public health crises and here, as in many places, roles such as nurses, midwives, community health workers are indeed often filled by women. We focus on caregivers and their critical work by ensuring that they receive regular and prioritised testing, which reflects their increased risk of infection. The youth service My Time project is also supporting young carers, with over 1,500 interventions by youth workers ranging from a weekly check in text or phone calls to online youth work sessions and walk and talk sessions. The third one, which is maintenance of core health and education services, so from the outset clinicians from paediatric and maternity services have been at the forefront of public messaging encouraging families to attend clinics as usual and reassuring families that existing services are open as usual, despite the COVID-19 restrictions. Obviously there has been necessary nursery and school provision and also the isolation benefit was established. Fourth, engaging existing women's and youth networks to support connectivity and vital information flow, the children and families hub that has been established during the pandemic is obviously an example that now provides a range of resources on the Island to families. It is a long answer, obviously if there is further detail we are happy to provide to the Deputy.

4.22.1 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I thank the Chief Minister for his answer and, yes, I would be grateful to meet with him or one of this Ministers and I wonder if he could perhaps discuss with the Minister for Social Security about a pending meeting with herself and the Community Relations Trust, which would cover this topic. I wanted to focus in on the first recommendation of this report, which is to prioritise gender alongside disability, age and other marginalised groups in needs assessments and decisions on targeting and also recognise the excellent work that the Minister referred to. Is gender being considered at a basic level in all decisions, in the way that this first recommendation from U.N.I.C.E.F. does outline?

Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré:

Just to be clear, my understanding from the U.N.I.C.E.F. report is it says essentially - bearing in mind the recognition as we said earlier that women are at the forefront of all public health crises because

of the various roles they play - that together we must provide adequate support, including childcare, health services and other social support and protections for vital front line responders. Which I do believe we have been doing. Cash transfer programmes for women and girls need to be prioritised and it is vital we also champion family friendly policies to protect employees, reduce stress, et cetera. I think we have been trying to do that all the way through. I also refer the Deputy, of course, to the answer to her written question, which is 325, which was back in September. This was when we were starting to gather the data around individuals ... that is more ethnicity rather than gender but I will come back to that.