

2.2 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the funding arrangements between Health and Social Services and Family Nursing and Home Care:

Would the Minister describe the funding arrangements between Health and Social Services and Family Nursing and Home Care and what involvement, if any, he has in the arrangements for the audit and governance procedures of the organisation?

Senator B.E. Shenton (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

The funding arrangements are set out in Family Nursing and Home Care's annual report which is distributed at the A.G.M. (Annual General Meeting) every year. My department provides an annual grant which is uplifted for inflation each year and to reflect any new service or additional investment. The grant for 2008 is approximately £5.8 million and again this is in line with variations to reflect changing services. In addition to regular professional meetings where Health and Social Services Department and Family Nursing and Home Care colleagues meet to discuss the performance of Family Nursing and Home Care, my chief officer and I meet with the chairman and director of Family Nursing and Home Care on a quarterly basis with other meetings taking place as circumstances dictate. As the Constable is aware, Family Nursing and Home Care is a registered charity which last year celebrated its 100th anniversary. As a registered charity its internal management processes are independent and there are no means by which I have the power - nor would I wish to have the power - to intervene on a day-to-day basis into these processes. I am satisfied with these internal management processes which of course include audit and governance procedures. I can speak firsthand on these matters because until quite recently both myself and the Medical Officer of Health were on the management committee of Family Nursing and Home Care.

2.2.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Is the Minister concerned about the effects on staff morale, on the ability of the organisation to raise other parts of income from charitable sources and on the confidence of the thousands of Islanders who depend on Family Nursing for their daily nursing care? Is he concerned about the effects on these groups from the current and prolonged suspension of the director?

Senator B.E. Shenton:

Over recent weeks I have only received praise from members of the public as to the services that Family Nursing and Home Care provide and I certainly have not received any complaints. The organisation is an excellent organisation providing excellent services. I do not have any of the concerns that the Constable points towards.

2.2.2 Senator S. Syvret:

The Minister suggested that he had no immediate powers or responsibilities to intervene in the organisation because it was an independent charity. Has he read the legal advice provided to the Health and Social Services Department that makes it plain that when the States fund organisations such as F.N.H.C. (Family Nursing and Home Care) they carry the burden or vicarious liability and complement with that is the responsibility to ensure that it is being managed appropriately?

Senator B.E. Shenton:

The Senator is correct. If I had concerns that there were major weaknesses at Family Nursing and Home Care of course I could intervene. The question from the Constable was more a general question about order and management procedures and certainly I would not intervene in the day-to-day management of Family Nursing and Home Care.

2.2.3 Deputy S.C. Ferguson of St. Brelade:

I wonder if the Minister would confirm that the service level agreement which has been sitting around for so long has been signed by Family Nursing with Health because obviously we need a service level agreement since something like 85 per cent of their funding comes from the States.

Senator B.E. Shenton:

The Deputy is correct. We do need a service level agreement and we need a service level agreement that is right for both parties. This has been a long and laborious negotiation and we are hopeful to be in a position to sign the service level agreement in the New Year but it has not as yet been signed.

Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

Really, this has been going on for at least 5 years to my knowledge under yourself and under the good Senator Syvret before you. Have you really no powers ...

The Bailiff:

Through the Chair please, Deputy.

Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

I am sorry, Sir. Are there really no powers you can bring into play to get this sorted out now? There is something in the order of £8.5 million of their £10 million turnover which is supplied by this House and there should be accountability.

Senator B.E. Shenton:

There is accountability and we are very close on a service level agreement. What we are trying to do at the moment is just tweak it slightly to take into account some of the proposals under the New Directions scheme to make sure that it fits in with everything that we want them to provide going forward and not just everything that they provide at the moment.

2.2.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour:

Would the Minister not concede as implied in Senator Syvret's question that in fact States procedures - best practices from the States - are applied to a body like Family Nursing and that given it is the director suspended and, therefore, that has a major impact - we are not talking about a minor day-to-day management issue - that this is an issue which calls for him to have an independent report on what is happening to one of the major service providers of health on the Island?

Senator B.E. Shenton:

I think the Deputy's question highlights his lack of experience in the management world. An organisation is much bigger than the individual. If you have an organisation that falls apart because one individual is suspended, you have a very bad organisation. Family Nursing and Home Care is a very good organisation. It is well set up and it is well run and it will continue to be well run regardless of whether one individual is suspended or not.

2.2.5 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Just a follow up. Would the Minister confirm that his judgment may be slightly altered by the fact he was very close to the organisation? Has he asked for an independent report, given the fact that the chairman went very public, very quickly with his version of events?

Senator B.E. Shenton:

This is an internal matter under investigation. It is very difficult to comment on it without prejudicing that investigation and I certainly would not want to do that. As I said before I have no complaints about Family Nursing and Home Care. I have spoken to the staff. I have spoken to the people. It is an excellent organisation and I think the Deputy is trying to make a mountain out of a molehill.

The Bailiff:

The Constable of St. Helier, a final supplementary, please.

2.2.6 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Would the Minister agree that best practice in terms of suspension usually - in fact under States procedure - requires informal means of resolution to be attempted before the nuclear option? Is he satisfied that this suspension has been carried out according to best practice? If he is not satisfied, is he going to do anything to encourage the board to make sure that this matter is resolved speedily in the interests of all of the stakeholders including the director herself?

Senator B.E. Shenton:

I have been kept fully informed with regard to the suspension and I am perfectly happy with the way it has been undertaken.