

2.2 Connétable D.J. Murphy of Grouville of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding consultation with ACET and the Brook organisation:

When was the last time that the Minister met with ACET and Brook and what plans does he have, if any, for further consultations with these agencies and charities?

Senator S. Syvret (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

Health and Social Services are committed to further developing contemporary sexual health services, preventing unplanned pregnancies and reducing the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections. It is recognised that the department will look to other service providers to plan an appropriate role in achieving effective sexual health care for Islanders. However, it is necessary for independent sector organisations to recognise the new financial constraints the States are under and the multitude of competing demands on the budget of Health and Social Services. Unfortunately, such recognition has not always been forthcoming. The last meeting officers and I had with ACET was not a useful exercise. Listening to senior health officials being lectured for half an hour on the prevalence of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) in Africa - something they are, of course, perfectly aware of - was not a constructive use of time and taxpayers' money. Whilst further meetings have been requested, none has taken place yet as ACET have not told us clearly what the agenda or purpose of such discussions would be. However, it could be inferred from the correspondence that their principal concern is the withdrawal of their grant by Health and Social Services. I and the Minister of Education, Sport and Culture clearly stated in November 2004 that our departments would no longer provide grand aid assistance to this organisation. It is intended that those areas of activity dealt with by ACET can be delivered on a more cost effective basis by the Health Promotion Department. This will ensure that education and information on HIV and AIDS is delivered as part of a broad based sexual health programme. In respect of Jersey Brook, it is recognised that the organisation has an important continuing role to play in the overall delivery of sexual health services. It serves a particularly vulnerable group for whom access to mainstream service, in some cases, may be difficult. For this reason, Health and Social Services is committed to ensuring that Jersey Brook continues to be supported to fulfil the needs of its original target group. I personally have had no recent meetings with Brook as none have been requested. There has been routine contact between Brook and offices of Health and Social Services. These discussions focus of wider service issues in addition to funding. Jersey Brook continues to be financially supported by Health and Social Services and we expect to finalise a service level agreement with them which will clearly stipulate the services to be provided as part of the overall sexual health strategy.

2.2.1 The Connétable of Grouville:

The Minister may recall that in his response to the Drug Scrutiny Panel Review on substance misuse (Article 14), he did say that, having said that, it was recognised that more could be done to improve communication with other sectors. We are hardly achieving that, are we? ACET have actually asked for meetings repeatedly since July 2005 and there are 2 letters on file, dated 19th October last year and 10th December last year, which as of yet have not even had an acknowledgement or a reply. May I suggest that he, perhaps, ask his offices to get in touch with ACET and perhaps sit down and talk to them to decide exactly whether they are going to be constructive or not. I think you might find the situation has changed.

Senator S. Syvret:

As I made plain in the original answer there has been correspondence certainly from ACET to Health and Social Services, but I reiterate the point that no clear indication has been given in that correspondence precisely what it is ACET expects to achieve out of the situation and I and other previous Presidents of Committees reached a stage of complete exhaustion in attempting to deal with this organisation. What is perfectly clear to us is that the £55,000 per annum given by Health and Social Services to ACET - £55,000 of taxpayers' money - would be more constructively, more efficiently, more cost effectively used delivering frontline sexual health strategies than paying the salary of the director of ACET.

2.2.2 The Connétable of Grouville:

As you know, this grant has been stopped. ACET does not receive any money from the States. They are, at the moment, working on a budget of £180,000 a year which is provided to them by numerous smaller charities and individual people who take this HIV situation extremely seriously. May I just advise the Minister I think he might be helping the taxpayer by contacting this very well worthwhile agency and trying to help them rather than to hinder them and make slurs and accusations against them?

2.2.3 The Deputy Bailiff:

That is an assertion. What is your question, Connétable? This is question time.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Sorry, I was following with a question. The question is would he please contact this agency in order to clarify the situation and clear the air?

Senator S. Syvret:

Certainly, Sir. I am happy to contact the organisation and ask them to put to us in writing precisely what it is they want from Health and Social Services. I am happy to do that and I am happy to meet with them providing there is a clear and constructive understanding between the 2 organisations as to precisely what we are trying to achieve here and precisely what the objectives are.

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

On the theme of relationships to voluntary bodies, would the Minister acknowledge whether he has had a recent meeting with Family Nursing and whether the issues that were to the forefront last year have now been resolved and there is now a stable and enduring relationship with Family Nursing which is based on their continuance as a major provider?

Senator S. Syvret:

Yes, Sir. Indeed there were communication difficulties - to put it mildly, I think, in fairness - between Health and Social Services and Family Nursing and Homecare which came to a head in the budget about 14 months ago. I am very happy to report that since then the working relationship between Health and Social Services and Family Nursing and Homecare has improved dramatically. Officers routinely meet from both organisations. A constructive way forward is organised. We are on the verge of finally settling upon the service level agreement between Health and Family Nursing and Homecare and I am also pleased to be able to report that we are very near to solving the job families issues which was affecting some employees of Family

Nursing and Homecare. So, certainly, I am happy to report that working relations between the 2 organisations are vastly improved.