

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS
BY DEPUTY G.C.L. BAUDAINS OF ST CLEMENT**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 15th JANUARY 2008

Question

Would the Minister confirm that the current police investigation into allegations of child abuse has broadened to include examination of instances where people might have prevented this alleged abuse, but failed to do so for whatever reason and, if so, would she concede that there could be instances where the States of Jersey Police themselves failed to act – perhaps through insufficient evidence and, if so, would she explain what actions, if any, would be taken should such a scenario arise where the police might be conflicted ?

Answer

The current investigation is examining a significant number of allegations of historic abuse. Operational decisions in respect of the enquiry are a matter for the Chief Officer although I have been regularly briefed and consulted on all of the key issues. Any investigation into historic offences will inevitably raise questions of whether action could have been taken at an earlier date and whether individuals in positions of responsibility have properly discharged their responsibilities, particularly where the interests of children are concerned. This investigation is no exception. It may be worth taking this opportunity to remind members that the role of the police in this matter is to investigate conduct which may amount to a breach of the criminal law by any person, and in the case of a serving police officer, any conduct which may constitute a disciplinary issue. It would not be appropriate for the police to investigate allegations of professional neglect by members of other agencies, although in some circumstances it will be appropriate to draw any evidence of such conduct to the attention of the agency concerned.

In any large and complex investigation there is an unavoidable need to determine investigation priorities. In this case it has been decided that at this time, the investigation of historic allegations will focus on alleged criminal offences against children. The investigation of any historic allegations of neglect or failure to act will be considered at a later date. I have however agreed with the Chief Officer that there will be an exception to this general rule in any case where an allegation of failure to take appropriate action relates to a police officer and where that police officer is still a serving member of the force. I have been made aware of one current case which falls within these terms. The circumstances of this case have been the subject of independent advice from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and in consequence of this advice a senior officer from a UK force has been appointed by the Chief Officer to independently investigate the circumstances and to make recommendations. The investigation will be conducted under the Jersey regulations covering the conduct of police officers and will be independently supervised by the Jersey Police Complaints Authority. Any action in consequence of the investigation falls within the legal remit of the Chief Officer, but as with the enquiry in general, it is anticipated that I will continue to be briefed and consulted on the outcome.

Given the sensitive nature of the investigations and the need to avoid prejudicing any current line of enquiry it is not appropriate to give further details at this time.