

2.8 Senator S.C. Ferguson of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding support for those suffering from addictions in the Island:

Why does the Health and Social Services White Paper *Caring for Each Other, Caring for Ourselves* and indeed, P.82/2012 Health and Social Services: A new way forward fail to address what support there will be for those suffering from addictions in the Island?

Deputy A.E. Pryke of Trinity (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

I would like to thank the Senator for asking this important question and I would like to reassure her that supporting healthy lifestyles is a key priority in both the White Paper and the report and proposition. Evidence has shown that Jersey has a particular problem with alcohol consumption and that is why it is prioritised in the first phase of the developments. The Alcohol Pathway that has currently been developing pending States approval of this proposition will include early intervention services in order to prevent serious harm to people's health in the future. That is why taking action in this critical area is important and that is why this proposition before us is vital.

2.8.1 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Yes but the Minister only refers to alcohol being the main issue but there is also the question of substance abuse and drug addiction, which is possibly even bigger, but there is no work which has been done to indicate the size of the problem since the Imperial College Review in 2001. When is that going to occur?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Again, I would like to reassure her that if she looks at pages 41 and 42 of the proposition, illegal drugs are prioritised for 2019 to 2021. In the meantime, we need to recognise that this proposition sets out service developments that are in addition to existing business as usual. Health and Social Services Drug and Alcohol Service already provides a range of support to addicts focusing both on abstinence and harm reduction as there are a number of voluntary and community based organisations supporting that problem.

2.8.2 Deputy J.G. Reed of St. Ouen:

I would just like to ask the Minister for Health, given the response that she has just given with regard to addressing drug addiction in 2019; does she believe that in the meantime sufficient attention is being paid to helping those suffering with drug addiction? If not, will she be prepared to advance efforts to address this matter before the proposed period of 2019, which ultimately is nearly 6 years away?

The Deputy of Trinity:

As quite rightly said, it is a concern, but also I would like to reiterate there are some services in place and with business as usual it will continue to do the developments. But our priority at this moment in time was the Alcohol Pathway because we know that alcohol is a big problem in our Island. You only have to go to Liberation Square on Friday and Saturday nights... If I could advise of any further development, I would be very happy to but it does come at a price but if you look on pages 41 and 42, it is highlighted.

2.8.3 Senator L.J. Farnham:

I wonder if Minister for Health is aware or has statistics of the extent of illegal drug addiction in the Island and if so, would she consider sharing that with the Assembly?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I do not have the exact statistics but I am sure the Medical Officer of Health would only be too happy to give that information out to States Members because previous M.O.H. (Medical Officer of Health) reports have always identified that Jersey has a big problem and with the Jersey

Annual Social Survey done each year, the number of people that do fill in the forms say they are increasing and their drinking is going up. Therefore, it is important and we need to address it.

2.8.4 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

The Minister is well aware that the quantity of alcohol being imported, according to the impôts, is falling but that is another story which does not quite gel with her facts. But the Scrutiny Panel made some specific comments and some specific recommendations with regard to addiction problems. Will the Minister confirm that her department will be following those up and in fact complying with them?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I am very grateful for the Scrutiny Panel's review and under-21 recommendations and, yes, we will be replying to that, but regarding alcohol, I know that Senator Ferguson is very interested in it and has had meetings with the Medical Officer of Health and indeed, her question on Tuesday, 17th April, highlighted the response from the M.O.H. that it is a serious problem.