

25 April 2023

Dear Chair,

Quarterly Hearing: Additional Questions

Thank you for your letter dated 17 April 2023 which contained some additional questions following the Quarterly Hearing held on 13 April 2023. Please see responses below.

Women's Health

1. What developments have taken place in the Women's health strategy and what is the timescale for presentation and implementation of the strategy?

The women's health strategy consists of three interlinked pieces of work.

The first is a review of Termination of Pregnancy law, as briefly discussed at the hearing on 13 April. We plan on launching a public consultation on changes to the law in **May / June 2023**. Depending on feedback received, we envisage bringing forward in-principle changes to the Assembly in early 2024. Please note this timeframe may change if, for example, we are required to scope and cost service changes alongside proposed legislative changes.

As part of this work, we will be considering the fees and charges associated with termination of pregnancy.

The second is the development of a women's health strategy. To date, I have established a political advisory group which includes both Ministers and non-ministers. Officers are currently undertaking initial research with a view to launching a first phase of public consultation in Q3 2023. The aim of this first phase of consultation is to identify the issues faced by women and girls in Jersey in order that we can develop proposed solutions which will be subject to a second round of consultation in early 2024. This should allow for development of 2025 Government Plan business cases in Q2 2024.

It is important to note that many of the solutions to the challenges faced by women and girls may fall outside of my remit as MHSS and will likely require a cross-government response.

This third piece of work is a review of fees assisted reproduction and contraception, which will include sterilisation. We will launch a public consultation in September 2023 with a view to developing a business case in Spring 2024 for 2025 Government plan.

- 2. Your Delivery Plan for 2023 states that you will produce an updated suicide prevention strategy by Q4 2023, focusing on preventing suicide and reducing incidence of self-injury associated with mental distress. Has the working group been established as set out for Q1 of this year to progress this work?;**

The working group was established in January 2023 and has been meeting weekly to progress the project. It benefits from public health, clinical and project management expertise. The steering group was established in February 2023, to oversee the working group and provide wider input to the project.

a) When do you plan to begin stakeholder engagement?

A stakeholder engagement framework has been drafted and is scheduled for discussion with the steering group on 21 April 2023. Based on the current timeline, it is anticipated the stakeholder engagement phase will have commenced by June 2023.

- 3. Are you able to advise, at this stage, how you intend to update the strategy to focus on suicide prevention?**

At present the working and steering groups' collective focus is the development of a needs assessment. When complete, this will inform the strategy deliverables. The project remains on schedule, so draft deliverables will be available by the fourth quarter.

- 4. How do you currently reach individuals who may be having suicidal thoughts but have not previously accessed mental health services (for example, Communications)?**

The steering group benefits from broad representation and its membership includes those with lived experience, professionals from the health sector, and a range of system partners. Steering group members are working collaboratively to draw on established links with high-risk groups, in particular, those with limited or no service contact. To date there has been encouraging progress through discussions with representatives from the community and voluntary sector and the police, and further discussions with representatives from the education sector are currently being planned. As the project enters the engagement phase, its reach will widen further to ensure the insights of those Islanders at greatest risk are captured, through a variety of channels.

Dementia Strategy

- 5. We understand that the survey that was launched to gather views on how Jersey supports people with dementia and their carers closed on 11th April. How many people responded to the survey and are you able to inform the Panel of any reoccurring views or suggestions that were made?**

The public survey for the Dementia Strategy has been extended to the end of April to allow for a Portuguese language survey to be shared with the public. 427 people responded to the survey as of 18th April 2023. As the survey has not yet closed, analysis of themes has not yet commenced, however this is scheduled for May 2023.

6. Can you update the Panel on the work regarding the Health Protection Partnership across Government is going so far?

The Health Protection Partnership is still in early stages, but progress is being made. There is good engagement with all partners involved in health protection across Government including emergency planning, infection prevention and control and environmental health.

Progress has been made on all six of the recommendations:

1. **Governance and partnership working:** The Health Protection Partnership are meeting weekly to discuss acute health protection matters – cases of infectious disease, outbreak management - and to feed into the process of developing standard operating procedures to ensure that they are fit for purpose. A memorandum of understanding is in development which will outline the roles and responsibilities for all members of the partnership, providing clarity and structure for all. A governance structure is being determined currently which will mean that the governance structures incorporate the remaining COVID-19 functions as part of business as usual.
 2. **Workforce skills and capacity:** We are participating in the process to produce a business case as part of the Government Plan for ongoing appropriate resource for the Public Health directorate for health protection, in line with the Jersey Audit Office recommendation that Public Health is properly equipped to deal with health protection. This will ensure that we have the financial security to retain staff from the pandemic response and develop staff who need upskilling and their remit expanded from a single infectious disease to the broader considerations in health protection.
 3. **Surveillance and case management:** Disease notification and surveillance is an essential foundation for health protection; we are working on developing a digital notification and surveillance system, so that we can receive notifications and monitor the cases, so that we know what is normal and whether we are seeing an increase in cases of any particular diseases.
 4. **Strategy and planning:** We are beginning the process to review the delivery of vaccination services, and in 2024 we will begin the process for a broader health protection strategy.
 5. **Legislation:** With colleagues from Policy, the Public Health Law and the Civil Contingencies Law are in the process of being updated and are on track to be lodged in 2024.
 6. **External collaboration:** We have launched a Channel Islands' Public Health Alliance with Guernsey, where we have committed to working together for the public benefit, and we are in the early stages of progressing a formal arrangement with the UK Health Security Agency for support on highly specialised and emergency matters.
- 7. Are there any initial details about the procurement or development of the digital surveillance system to monitor infectious diseases that you are planning to bring in Q4 2023 that you can share at this stage?**

As noted above, as part of the implementation of the Health Protection Review, we are working on developing a digital notification and surveillance system, so that we can receive notifications and monitor the cases, so that we know what is normal and whether we are seeing an increase in cases of any particular diseases.

The first phase involves developing an interim surveillance system which builds on the processes developed to monitor COVID cases. This interim work is planned in a way to ensure that it will also form part of any permanent solution that is procured, and it is hoped to be in place before Q3 2023, allowing for regular reporting of data at this stage. The work towards a more permanent system is also underway, with extensive requirements gathering from all stakeholders already undertaken and progress being made through the required procurement processes.

If the Panel require anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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