

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY SENATOR F. DU H. LE GRESLEY
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 19th OCTOBER 2010**

Question

Would the Minister advise how many States funded beds have been reserved in private nursing homes and whether there are presently any vacancies? Could she also advise how many patients, currently residing on Corbiere Ward at the General Hospital, are awaiting transfer to nursing home beds and the length of time that each such patient has been waiting? What contingency plans, if any, does her Department have to deal with any "bed blocking" that may be caused by any current or future shortage of nursing care home beds?

Answer

The Health and Social Services Department has contracted with the private sector to provide up to 78 nursing care beds. A further 5 are contracted for respite nursing care and 2 for residential respite placements.

There are currently 2 nursing care bed vacancies and these will be filled this week. 5 patients on Corbiere Ward have been referred to the elderly care service for potential placement in a nursing care bed. As of 15th October 2010 only 3 of these 5 patients are fit enough to be moved and as a consequence the remaining 2 patients have been removed from the nursing care list. This is quite common when caring for frail elderly patients whose condition can fluctuate markedly within a matter of days. For patient safety reasons the department would only seek to move stable patients once their acute care needs have been met.

The referral dates, made to the elderly care services for the 3 patients on Corbiere Ward waiting for nursing care beds, are 23rd and 28th September and 10th October 2010. As of 15th October 2010 the maximum length of time that each patient has been waiting for a nursing care bed is between 5 days and 23 days. As can be seen from these figures, the Department does not have a significant "bed blocking" problem at this time.

In common with similar establishments, the Department maintains close control over demand and capacity issues affecting its bed complement and has to manage this capacity to meet fluctuations in both elective and emergency admissions and deal with infection control issues. As part of this process the Department has a winter pressure plan to meet anticipated increased activity over this period. The Department has also a contingency plan to open more beds on Samares Ward, at Overdale, for patients awaiting nursing care placement in the event of capacity issues arising in the private sector.