

2019.10.08

20 Deputy K.G. Pamplin of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding a facility to provide a place of safety for Islanders in relation to their mental health: (OQ.231/2019)

Further to the responses to my written questions on the subject of places of safety for Islanders in relation to their mental health, will the Minister advise whether a new facility to provide such a place of safety will be established as a matter of urgency?"

The Deputy of St. Ouen (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

A place of safety had previously been identified as the General Hospital; however, following a recent review, it has been recognised by staff and clinicians that that does not provide an optimal solution and so a medium term plan has been put in place to provide a place of safety as part of the Clinique Pinel and Orchard House capital plan. Ultimately, I believe mental health services, including a place of safety, should be co-located in our new General Hospital.

4.20.1 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I thank the Minister for his answer and the answer to the written questions, also curiously the answer from the Minister for Children and Housing. We know that young people and adults are being supported in the General Hospital, as we speak, for those who have sadly decided to take options to take their own lives and this is carrying on at the moment as the answers continue to show that number is going to far exceed last year's total as well; so I ask again, as a matter of priority, when this place of safety will be operational? We were told in previous Scrutiny hearings earlier this year that the place in the hospital would be up and running in June. It is now October. When will this facility of a place of safety be in place to help our Islanders as a matter of urgency?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Could I remind the Deputy that the numbers given in the written answer are not those brought to a place of safety by police officers? Those are those that have received a mental health assessment in the General Hospital and that is different because many people present voluntarily. The General Hospital is a place of safety and the police will bring people in dire distress to the General Hospital as the default option, rather than the police station. It is only in extreme cases where their needs cannot be met at the present time at the General Hospital that they are taken, for their own safety, to the police station and then will probably be brought back to the General Hospital when appropriate for their assessment of need. Those arrangements will need to continue while we build the new accommodation at Clinique Pinel, which, of course, will meet the best specifications possible, but we presently operate a place of safety at the General Hospital. It is frustrating that it seems to take so long for these building plans to come into operation. I signed a Ministerial Decision 2 Fridays ago, that is about 20 days ago, to submit the plans for the Clinique Pinel to the Planning Department, but I am told that those plans are still being tweaked, or the application is still being tweaked, so the application is still not in. I continue to press on this. I am concerned about the timetable I have been given for the building works and I do want to accelerate it and make sure that we start absolutely as soon as we can, because I recognise the urgency, the Government recognise the urgency, this whole House recognises the urgency, to make proper provision for our acute mental health services. I do not want this to just be the normal flow of letting a tender and then you create a tender document and then you have a meeting to decide who should be awarded the tender and then we have to wait for the contractor to start. I want to be in a position where we can

have the tender document ready now and I am asking that question, why that is not possible. I will continue to press and ensure that we can get this facility delivered, as soon as we can.

4.20.2 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I thank the Minister for answering so honestly about his frustrations. I think we all share them. I would just like to return to a statement made in 2015 by a report to the child and adult police subgroup progress report: "The Island of Jersey has no designated place of safety other than the States Police Headquarters." A joint unilateral statement by the Home Office: "Places of safety should be typically hospitals, or other medical facilities." As we know, our General Hospital serves its purpose as well as it could, but as long as this goes on, the Islanders who need that support are being failed. I ask again, what more can the Minister do, given now he has aired those grievances, so we can move this forward as we talked about earlier this year, that by the end of this year we would have things in place?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

We will not have a place of safety to the specification that would be recognised in the U.K. by the end of this year, but the ambition is to have that place of safety by the end of next year and that is what I am urging should happen when that building work, I hope, will be completed in time. It is no longer the case that, as a default option, people are taken to police cells. The default option is that, wherever possible, where it is safe, people are taken to the General Hospital and there is a facility there and legally, under the mental health law, the General Hospital acts as our place of safety for the time being.