

2.9 Deputy F.J. Hill of St. Martin of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the difficulties recruiting and retaining suitably qualified nurses across the Health Service:

Will the Minister inform Members of the main finding of the Income Data Services Report commissioned jointly by the States Employment Board and the Department of Health and Social Services into the difficulty in recruiting and retaining suitably qualified nurses across the Health Service and will the Minister inform Members of what actions, if any, she proposes to take in regard to this matter?

The Deputy of Trinity (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

The Income Data Services Review concluded there were 8 key findings, one of the main ones being that the nurses and midwives are financially worse off in Jersey than those employed in the U.K. (United Kingdom). The biggest contributing factor is the cost of living, housing, transport and childcare costs. I am currently working with the States Employment Board and my department to address these issues. In the meantime, the department will continue to deliver the initiatives outlined in the answer to written question 6133 which was asked today.

2.9.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:

I am surprised that the Minister had to go outside the Island to tell us that the staff in Jersey are getting paid a different rate than those in the U.K. Can the Minister explain why allied health professionals are paid at a Civil Service rate whereas the nurses are paid at a nursing rate, which is considerably lower than the allied health professionals are?

The Deputy of Trinity:

The I.D.S. (Income Data Services) Report was commissioned jointly between the States Employment Board and the Department of Health and it was after we went to the States Employment Board back in October 2009. As regarding the question of the allied health professionals and the different pay rates, I am afraid I cannot answer that question.

[10:30]

2.9.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Minister consider releasing the full report to the appropriate Scrutiny Panel - i.e. mine - in the near future under confidence if required? Will she accept that the overall thrust of the report was that nurses working in Jersey are some 15 per cent worse off than they are on the mainland and that the offer we are talking about being made to nurses is a 5 per cent offer for Grades, I think, 5, 6 and 7 which is a minimal offer and costs the department very little because it does not apply to Grade 4 where the numbers are?

The Deputy of Trinity:

As regarding releasing the report to the Scrutiny Panel, I have no problem with it. It was a joint endeavour between S.E.B. and the Department of Health so I would just check with the States Employment Board too but, from my point of view, I do not see that I have any problems. You are quite right. The problems are found in Grade 5 which is Senior Sister post but the absolute numbers where the most acute problem is is Grade 4 and we are looking, as I said, with the States Employment Board at ways of addressing that pay issue in that area. But it is not just one issue, as I highlighted

before. It is housing, it is transport, it is childcare costs and also I think 93 per cent nurses are female, and so if they move from the U.K. to Jersey, they are usually the main breadwinner. So they have got to take into account that the husband leaves his job and what is going to happen to that. So it is a multitude of different problems.

2.9.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Can the Minister simply confirm that the pay gap is around 15 per cent between the U.K. and Jersey?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I would just need to check that but if the Deputy has that figure then I would have expected it to be right.

2.9.4 Deputy A.E. Jeune:

Would the Minister agree that the shortage of nurses is an international problem and money is not necessarily the main motivator for nurses? It is more a case of wanting to work somewhere because the environment is right and the culture is right.

The Deputy of Trinity:

As 2 good nurses, both committed to nursing and the care to health, I would agree but we have also got to think that it is a changing world and, as I have just mentioned about if nurses do come over here - relocate over here - they are the main breadwinner. In my day, most student nurses went in at the age of 21 or 18 straight from school. But the average age of a nurse coming into the profession now is 34 years old so the whole profession has changed. Regarding at the other end, 83 per cent of our nurses are due to retire in the next 5 years.

2.9.5 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Has the Minister considered the amount that is being paid out in effectively agency and locum nurses? Efficiencies there might well go a long way to being able to boost permanent nurses' pay.

The Deputy of Trinity:

I understand where the Senator is coming from but it is a bit of a roundabout circle. We need to have a full complement of staff on the wards, and not only on the wards but in the specialist units as well. If we can, our first port of call obviously is the bank staff but if you cannot get those, then we have to go out to agency nurses and the cost of that is greater than employing our own because they are agency nurses, but some places unfortunately will be filled by agency nurses. But the area is diverse and you have got to take into account staff sickness, maternity leave, *et cetera*, as well as the kind of attitude here is that nurses might perform like in-flight transfers.

2.9.6 Senator T.J. Le Main:

When I was Minister for Housing, I was very keen to see the Housing Department work with Health on providing affordable housing for nurses being recruited. Will the Minister confirm that most of the nurses that are being recruited now are married with children and require affordable accommodation? Could the Minister inform the Assembly if, in fact, the new Minister for Housing and the department are still working towards the aim of providing within their stock some family accommodation so that nurses can have affordable accommodation and recruit the right kind of nurses,

particularly from Ireland at the moment where there is a huge surplus of nurses looking for work?

The Deputy of Trinity:

If I just answer the last question about nurses in Ireland, and there was active recruitment out to Ireland and, in fact, only one person applied for that job because most nurses there who owned property could not afford to sell the property to be able to move to Jersey. There are very complex issues regarding housing and staffing accommodation, yes I know. My Assistant Minister and I are working to look at having good staff accommodation because it does make a tremendous amount of difference.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Just 2 more questions. Deputy Shona Pitman?

2.9.7 Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier:

Does the Minister believe that the below inflation pay rise for this year is a contributing factor towards the lack of staff and also will she be supporting a below inflation pay rise for 2012 if this is agreed by the Council of Ministers?

The Deputy of Trinity:

As I said, it is not one issue. Childcare costs and housing costs are important in the whole mix and so it is these ... the difficulty with recruitment and retention is a specific pay grade of pay Grades 4 and 5 which is Junior and Senior Sister posts. That is where the main gap in vacancies occurs.

2.9.8 Deputy S. Pitman:

The Minister has not answered my questions. Firstly, does she believe the below inflation pay rise for this year has contributed to the lack of staff in this particular area and also will she be supporting a below inflation pay rise for 2012 if this is agreed by the Council of Ministers?

The Deputy of Trinity:

There are 2 different issues there. We have to find within the States the £65 million shortfall. We have to find that saving and the nurses will get a pay rise, but I am actively looking at all the nurses' pay and especially, as I said, Grade 4 and Grade 5 and we will continue to work with the States Employment Board to address these issues.

2.9.9 The Deputy of St. Martin:

If I could just ask the Minister first that she said she did not know the answer to why health professionals are paid a Civil Service rate and were therefore at a higher rate than nurses, but she did not know the answer. Could I ask the Minister to provide that answer if she could please and, as my supplementary, the Minister did mention about the agency nurses. Will the Minister inform Members whether in fact agency nurses get paid at a higher rate than normal nurses, so therefore there are possibly nurses who would rather go into it as agency nurses rather than working in the public health service because they will get a higher rate of pay?

The Deputy of Trinity:

As regarding the first part, yes, I will because I think that is a very interesting question. Because they are agency nurses, they will get a higher rate of pay because you can get them at short notice and they come in to do a specific job and then go again. That has been there for many years.