

4.12 Deputy M.R. Higgins of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the Department's recruitment and selection process:

Will the Minister explain to Members how the department's recruitment and selection process ensures that the doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists and consultants employed in the Island are skilled and experienced to a high standard?

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

The successful recruitment of appropriately qualified and skilled staff is crucial to the delivery of high quality of services and, most importantly, the safety of patients and clients we care for. Consultants, including psychiatrists, are subject to an extremely rigorous process before appointment. Jersey has always applied the relevant recruitment techniques required by U.K. statute. Since 2012, this process has been further improved, enhanced and independently validated. By benchmarking with some of the highest performing and most distinguished hospitals, our current recruitment and selection framework compares with the very best in the U.K. This process includes enhanced reference checking, psychometric tests, additional pre-interview selection activities and evidence of the doctor's revalidation status. This framework also now directly involves very senior States of Jersey staff with an expert and experienced Health Services background. Clinical psychologists are not medical staff and not governed by the same statutory framework. The recruitment of clinical psychologists is subject to the robust and rigorous procedure set out in the States of Jersey Civil Service Recruitment and Selection processes.

4.12.1 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

They are fine words and reassurance but the department's record in the last few years has been absolutely appalling and I do not know how anyone can accept anything that comes out of the department in that way. In recent years, we have had a psychologist who was concerned with children who made serious unfounded accusations against a number of families and whose probationary period was not followed up with a formal contract. We have had a doctor who operated on a former nurse resulting in her death and she was not trained or capable of performing the operation without supervision. We just recently had a consultant gynaecologist who has been found incapable of diagnosing patients and requires further training. In light of these recent experiences, plus the complaints that are being made against the hospital services at the present time, what confidence can people really have that what the Minister says and what the department is doing are one and the same?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I take great offence to what the Deputy said. **[Approbation]** We have a very good health service and I said that the recruitment process has been strengthened, and we are using more medical staff to be recruited using an Appointments Advisory Committee. In fact, that panel are representatives from the relevant Royal Colleges. Regarding doctors that are excluded, that is very important that we make sure that all our staff, wherever they are, are good in their job and that if any concerns are raised by a member of staff or the public, that they are addressed immediately.

[11:15]

4.12.2 Deputy J.H. Young:

Could the Minister confirm that those procedures and careful processes that she explained apply to all clinical appointments, including short-term locums?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Yes. I do not know about short-term locums if they are only over for a day. There is a process which has been revalidated for short-term locums but I will come back and check that. Regarding long-term locums, yes, I am sure it does but also to say that the process has been validated by the Medical Staffing Unit of the N.H.S. (National Health Service) employees and by the National Association of Medical Personnel Specialists.

4.12.3 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Given the state that the National Health Service is in at the moment, is it really the appropriate source of knowhow and so on at the moment?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Yes. The quality of all staff is important. As I have said, we take patient safety very, very seriously and that is why a very rigorous recruitment process is put in place.

4.12.4 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Could I just ask the Minister then, is she going to say to us we will not be hearing of any more complaints about doctors who are not trained, not skilled or not capable of doing the thing? She is so confident in the system that she expects that we will not be hearing of these matters again. Is that correct?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Nobody in any hospital or any medical profession can give that guarantee. I think Deputy Higgins sometimes lives in a very difficult world because he thinks the worst of everybody. Our doctors are very good. They go through a proper recruitment process and they do a difficult job and they are well supervised and they take all concerns and all complaints very, very seriously.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can I raise a point of order? I believe there is a Standing Order that says Members should not impute false or improper motives and to say that a Deputy or another Member of the House always thinks the worst of everyone I think falls foul of that Standing Order.

The Bailiff:

I do not think so. I do not think that was imputing improper motives.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Every Member who gets elected to the Assembly goes in with the intention of best wishes and they do not see evil wherever it may or may not occur, Sir, so I think that ...

The Bailiff:

The Standing Order is against imputing improper motives. I do not think that the Minister was imputing improper motives to the Deputy at all. She was just saying he has a rather bleak outlook on things. First of all, I am sure the Deputy does not agree with that but, secondly, that is not imputing improper motives. A motive is a reason for doing something.