

23.03.21

20 Deputy R.J. Ward of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding facilities for adults with learning difficulties (OQ.48/2023)

Further to the decision by Les Amis to abandon their plans to build a new facility at the Hampshire Hotel, what actions is the Minister considering, if any, in relation to the provision of facilities for adults with learning difficulties?

Deputy K. Wilson (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

The Health and Community Services Department and also the Customer and Local Services Department have been working closely with Les Amis since November last year in relation to the provision of services for people with a learning disability. The joint work has included a review of current and future need as well as discussions about the current residential model provided by Les Amis, some of the challenges relating to this, and potential future service models. The departments have also been working with Les Amis to ensure that the way we commission services for people with a learning disability is financially stable and sustainable. During this period of joint working, additional financial support has been provided to Les Amis. So the position is that the work is ongoing. We are exploring a range of potential models to meet future needs, including a bespoke model of care for people who have specific needs in relation to dementia and learning disability. Importantly, we intend to ensure that people who use services and their carers are central to this work and actively engaged in it and that we develop a range of services that can meet the needs of the population and I think we have already alluded earlier in various discussions, so that this is an evidence-based approach to what the need is. One of the things that we do want to do is to improve our commissioning model, which stabilises the current model of residential care. We do not have at the moment a learning disabilities strategy and that is something that I will be seriously considering as we go forward and an issue to come out of these discussions. I know officers are meeting with members of the Les Amis board following their announcement today and any outcome from that we will of course take into consideration as we go forward.

3.20.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:

I am trying to word this very carefully but there is a lot to it. The Les Amis project would have been the first of its kind in the Channel Islands and it recognises both recognition that laws are being passed elsewhere that those, for example, with Downs Syndrome are entitled to lifelong care and it is expected that the number of people with dementia will double in the next 20 years. Can I ask, what facilities are planned that will offer and guarantee lifelong care to the people who, in the long term, and in the next few years, will desperately need that and, in my opinion, are entitled to that care?

Deputy K. Wilson:

Yes, and I agree with the Deputy that we do need to take a more holistic and systemic and longitudinal look at the needs of people with learning disability. I think we are dealing with the immediacy of the situation at this moment in time to help Les Amis get to a place where they can sustain their service offer at the moment. We are in discussions with them about different ways to meet some of the need that the Deputy has identified. Again, if I could just assure people that, because this is work in progress, we cannot provide any definitive answers to the number of units or the kind of model that we are going to provide, but will do going forward.

3.20.2 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Les Amis will presumably have put a lot of time, energy, and resources, into getting this far and they must be hugely disappointed to now feel that they cannot go ahead with it and to be in this situation. What can the Minister say to this Assembly and the wider public about how they engage with third-sector providers of these kinds of things that we clearly so desperately need so that they do not find themselves in situations where they dedicate so much to a new endeavour only to then, in the latter stages of it, feel that they cannot go ahead with it. Because that really is a waste for them and such a shame for the possibilities that they could have been enabling to provide for those people in that community.

Deputy K. Wilson:

Yes. What we are inheriting is a decision that was taken previously and, in my view, what I would want to provide assurance to the Assembly about is that where we are entering into discussions and negotiations and partnership work with the independent and third sector across the Island that we do so with intelligence and information that supports the support for financing and the cost of those models more appropriately. It is in the public domain, there have been longstanding issues with the sustainability of the service that is on offer. We are committed to working with Les Amis to provide a really good, comprehensive service for people with learning disability and that is certainly our commitment going forward.

3.20.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I ask the Minister to confirm that she does consider that there is a need to have specialist nursing and end-of-life care for those with learning difficulties?

Deputy K. Wilson:

Yes, I can confirm, and this is all part of the needs assessment that we will be looking at as part of the future model development.