

3.6 Senator L. Norman:

Would the Minister confirm that there are no circumstances whereby persons with a record for sex offences or violence may be employed in the education service?

Senator M.E. Vibert (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

I can confirm that all applicants for post within the Jersey Education Service are subject to a comprehensive screening procedure. This includes a criminal records check undertaken by the States of Jersey Police which references both local and national data. My department also checks 'List 99' which is held by the Department of Education and Skills in the UK and includes names of individuals excluded from employment as teachers. There are no circumstances in which a person with a known record for sex offences or violence would be employed locally.

3.6.1 Senator L. Norman:

I am very grateful for the assurance. I wonder if the Minister could confirm that the checks for 'List 99' do include all potential employees of the education staff such as teaching assistants, librarians, cleaners, caretakers, supply staff and so on. That not only is 'List 99' checked - which appears to have been at least partially ineffective in the United Kingdom - but also the sex offenders register which is held by the Criminal Records Bureau.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

All the checks at present that are carried out with records held by UK police are undertaken on our behalf by the States of Jersey Police, though there are moves afoot to enable the Department of Education in Jersey to undertake them directly. All staff who apply for employment within the department that have connections with children and access to children are checked in a comprehensive screening procedure.

3.6.2 Senator S. Syvret:

Is the Minister for Education aware that an extensive child abuse scandal took place at a local school in the 1990s and that the headmaster of the day, rather than being sacked or quite possibly prosecuted, was in fact given a substantial pay-off with the blessing of Senator Norman's Education Committee; and that one of the teachers who had to resign in disgrace was subsequently employed by the Harbours Department of which Senator Norman was the Vice-President?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I am uncertain how to answer that question, Sir. What I can say is I am aware of what took place in the 1990s. My children were at the school concerned at the time and I was very concerned about what happened. The principal malefactor concerned was prosecuted. He did not have a previous criminal record but he is now on 'List 99' and would never be employed within our service again.

3.6.3 The Deputy of St. Martin:

The Minister mentioned procedures. Could I ask the Minister if the same procedures are carried out in respect of other areas within Education Sport and Culture - and I am looking at possibly areas like the arts or culture or heritage? Thank you.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

As I said in a previous answer, in all areas where there is regarded to be access to

children and involvement with children, the checks are carried out and that is within all areas under my department's control.

3.6.4 Deputy R.G. Le Herissier:

I wonder, Sir, if the Minister could give a definition of what is "violence" or what offences does it embrace; and secondly, Sir, bearing in mind the Soham Inquiry - and I have got ambivalent views about what happened - what is done about people who may have accumulated - as was the case there - a series of no court appearances but who, nevertheless, have been subject to a series of serious allegations which did not result in successful prosecutions? Thank you, Sir.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I am sure the Deputy has as good a knowledge of what the definition of "violence" is as myself. I take it to be the normal meaning of the word "violence". As for the procedures that led up to the employment of someone with warnings, as in the Soham Inquiry, we rely on the local police who not only give us information that they have checked with the criminal records but they also inform us of any local intelligence they may have of complaints made, et cetera, on a confidential basis. We take whatever steps we can to ensure that anyone with a known record or concerns that have been raised about offences of a sexual nature or a violent nature, are brought to our attention and we do not - as has been apparent in the UK recently - have a system of discretion. We operate a policy whereby we do not employ anyone who has a known record.