

STATES OF JERSEY



HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT: MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Lodged au Greffe on 17th March 2010
by Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

to request the Minister for Health and Social Services to prepare and present to the Assembly for information within 6 months of the date on which the recently appointed Chief Executive takes up her post –

- (a) a Management Improvement Plan for the Health and Social Services Department which, *inter alia*, provides a structure, and leads to a culture, which underpins implementation of the recommendations of the Verita Report; and
- (b) plans for the introduction of strengthened and credible whistle-blowing procedures and patient complaint procedures.

DEPUTY R.G. LE HÉRISSIER OF ST. SAVIOUR

REPORT

The Minister has made much play of the implementation of the core 29 recommendations of the Verita Report. Unfortunately, follow-up questions in the House have not convinced the writer that the broader, underlying issues have been given the right prominence. The Minister keeps saying: “We must move on.” At the end of the day, there will need to be radical change to restore staff morale and the faith of the public in the Department. There will need to be convincing evidence of a major shift in management culture and of the existence of strong checks and balances.

There is an assumption that what members are looking for is to make staff accountable for the errors and alleged incompetence that brought the Department to this unhappy juncture. Sadly, there has also developed a defensiveness based on the perception that certain members see a conspiracy around every corner of the Health and Social Services Department. The writer does not subscribe to that view.

Certainly, there is a need for accountability, but it is equally important to ensure that the foundations for change are properly laid so that there genuinely is a fresh start.

In a sense, the Verita Report is a Report of 2 parts. First, there is a detailed description and analysis of the circumstances surrounding the tragic death of Mrs. Rourke. Second, there are general comments, often of a highly critical nature, concerning the management culture and the need for robust complaint and whistle-blowing procedures.

If the substantial changes implied in the findings of Verita are to be implemented, it is crucial that management reforms and reforms to the complaints procedures be carried out in parallel to the specific, often procedural, changes recommended by Verita. This proposition is written in general terms so that the Minister has flexibility in the kind of changes proposed. I do not wish to be accused of micro-management or of tying the hands of the new Chief Executive.

Conclusion

The Department has been subject to enormous stress in recent years. The Minister needs to ensure that the House is behind her in what will be a period of major change.

We must also remember that, notwithstanding the tragedy of what happened in the Hospital, much needs to be done in Social Services – historically, the “forgotten” part of the Department. An Assistant Minister for Health and Social Services, Deputy Noel, has drawn attention to the apparent propensity of members to interfere in the details of management.

He is right to warn us off, but the intention of this proposition is not to do that. It is to ensure that the fundamental issues exposed by Verita, and in the course of the child abuse inquiries, are fully addressed and that members can have confidence in the direction in which the Department is headed.

Financial and manpower implications

Proposing these measures is an integral part of political leadership and of the civil service leadership of the Department and there are therefore no additional financial or manpower implications.