

STATES OF JERSEY



FUNDING FOR WOMEN'S REFUGE

Lodged au Greffe on 26th June 2014
by the Deputy of St. Martin

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

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

to request the Minister for Treasury and Resources to identify the appropriate means of reinstating the funding for the Women's refuge from the proposed level of £189,000 in 2014 to a level of £209,000, and annually thereafter.

DEPUTY OF ST. MARTIN

REPORT

After 26 years of successfully providing vital services to the women and children of the Island, the Jersey Women's Refuge is facing a financial crisis: a crisis brought about as a result of the decision to cut the States' funding to the Refuge by a quarter during 2014 and 2015. This proposition seeks to redress that issue by reinstating the support that the States makes to the Refuge to the 2013 level.

The Refuge is the only safe place in the Island for women and children suffering domestic violence; indeed children make up two-thirds of the Refuge population. It offers a 24 hour service for those who seek expert help at any time of the day or night. They work closely with other agencies (the service is used widely by the States of Jersey Police, the Accident and Emergency Department of the Hospital and local doctors) providing the only safe place that victims in Jersey have to go in times of crisis. Women find leaving home difficult, especially when children are involved. Their loyalty to a partner often makes them vulnerable, often leaving them and their children in danger. If this essential and safe place is not available, where will they receive expert help and support in a totally secure environment... how can they receive help?

2013 saw the 25th Anniversary of the opening of the Refuge. They held many high-profile events throughout the year in order to promote the Refuge and keep it in the forefront of people's minds during these difficult financial times. The year concluded with the production of a video in which a selection of local men (including the Chief Minister) publicly supported the work done by all the staff at the Refuge.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_xqDy8oxG0

Jersey Women's Refuge is concerned about keeping women and children safe. Jersey is very different to the UK, where victims can be placed in towns and cities well away from their violent homes. In a small Island, where it is not possible to get very far away from anyone or anything, it is essential more than ever for women to know that their concerns remain confidential.

The Committee which runs this essential charity, now in its 26th year, feels the responsibility keenly, not only to abused women and children, but also to those highly trained staff and volunteers dedicated to their care. How can Health and Social Services and Home Affairs, both part of an intense drive to safeguard victims and reduce domestic violence, cut the funding by a quarter for the only safe place for women and children to go when home becomes a genuinely dangerous place to live?

Until now the Refuge has received an annual grant from Health and Social Services of £209,000, as compared to total expenditure of £387,677, made up of salaries totalling approximately £339,218 and other running expenses of £48,459. Accordingly, they now have to raise over £200,000 every year to cover salaries and running costs. The loss of a quarter of their grant, £50,000, is roughly equal to the salaries of two of the support workers within the Refuge. Underfunding puts the future of the Refuge at risk.

Eighteen months ago, the Refuge received a legacy of £834,000. They planned to use this legacy to secure the future of the Women's Refuge, which was no doubt the intention of the testator who left this money. They invested £500,000 to secure the future of the service in case of a deficit in fund-raising, especially as signs of this were already becoming apparent. They retained £334,000 of the legacy in order to invest in staff training, undertake necessary refurbishment and fund a new computer system to

comply with new safeguarding changes and allow for any unknown future commitments. It follows that, even if the States' grant is maintained, the Refuge will have to use funds from the legacy to meet running costs. In this present climate, it is unrealistic to expect the Refuge to raise more than previously from charitable donations. The result therefore of the cutting of the grant is that the legacy will be eaten into at an additional rate of £50,000 a year, or quite possibly more quickly.

Regardless of whether the gift of the legacy and the reduction in funding is coincidental, it is ill-advised of the States to give the impression that they are "taking a view" on legacies in this way. If the cut in funding is maintained, the perception will be such that it is unlikely that members of the public will leave money (in the form of legacies) to local charities in the future if they think that those donations would provide an excuse for the States to abandon commitments entered into for reasons of social need. The Women's Refuge legacy amounts to a sizeable amount of money if left for a specific project, but amounts to only a couple of years' running costs for the Refuge.

The Committee that runs the Refuge has many concerns, mainly financial. With regard to everyday running costs, donations in 2014 are spectacularly down. After taking into account the fact that £20,000 was donated specifically for a new kitchen, and £19,000 to pay the salary of one support worker, so far this year (as of 24th June) they have only managed to raise less than £4,000 towards running costs during the first half of 2014. Donors prefer money to go to specific "one-off" projects, rather than much-needed running costs. It is the States' grant that is used for these running costs, mainly salaries, and it will be impossible to maintain the 24 hour service if posts are cut due to a shortage in funding. We must never forget that this is a service that gets women and children out of violent situations.

Financial and manpower implications

This proposition does not seek additional funds. This proposition seeks to maintain the States' funding at the 2013 level. This proposition seeks to continue to help safeguard the women and children that live in dangerous and violent situations in Jersey.

Other than the reinstatement of the £20,000 that was not given to the Women's Refuge in 2014, there are no financial or manpower implications arising from this proposition.