

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY BY DEPUTY
I.J. GORST OF ST. CLEMENT**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 21st OCTOBER 2008

Question

R.89/2008 regarding the implementation of Dr. K. Bull's Report into Children with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) states, with regard to recommendation 17.1.8, that 'a recommendation for an External Independent Review Group was effectively superseded by the introduction (under Ministerial Government) of the Social Affairs Scrutiny Panel' (Scrutiny panel now split into two).

- a) Can the Minister explain how the Children's Executive arrived at this decision?
- b) Was the decision was communicated to the Scrutiny function, and if so, how?
- c) Did this decision meet both recommendations 17.1.8 and 17.2.1 (relating to the management of the re-vamped facility)?
- d) How many times have Ministers appeared before Scrutiny Panels to discuss these recommendations?
- e) Is the Children's Executive satisfied that its decision has worked in practice in a way envisaged by the 'Bull' report?

Answer

The context for the Deputy's question is Dr Kathy Bull's report into "Children with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD)" published in December 2002. But there have been two significant events which have occurred in the intervening period which have both significantly influenced the validity and the continued relevance of this report. The first is the introduction of Ministerial Government – which has introduced the concept of scrutiny and challenge to the executive. The second is the publication of the Andrew Williamson Inquiry Report in June 2008 (officers from Health and Social Services, Home Affairs, and Education Sport and Culture are currently drafting a comprehensive plan which will enable the implementation of all of this inquiry's recommendations).

Having said this, I would wish now to respond to the Deputy's five specific questions.

- a) Can the Minister explain how the Children's Executive arrived at this decision?**

When the Kathie Bull Report was published, the Committee-based system of government did not have a formal scrutiny and oversight function. The creation of this function – and particularly the creation of the Health, Social Security and Housing Scrutiny Panel – makes the specific Kathie Bull recommendation no longer relevant. This was the view of the Children's Executive – a view which was reasonable for senior professional people to come to – and this view was then subsequently accepted by the three Ministers who form the Corporate Parent (which is the body responsible for overseeing the work of the Children's Executive).

- b) Was the decision communicated to the Scrutiny function, and if so, how?**

The Children's Executive did not communicate this to the Scrutiny Panel, which was clearly an oversight for which I apologise.

- c) Did this decision meet both recommendations 17.1.8 and 17.2.1 (relating to the management of the re-vamped facility)?**

It is my judgement that the creation of this Scrutiny Panel does go some way to the creation of 'independent review'. However, the Andrew Williamson Inquiry has recommended the establishment of *professional* independent inspection and this particular recommendation is being addressed by officers as they seek to create the plan for the implementation of all of the recommendations of this inquiry – as I

referred to above.

d) How many times have Ministers appeared before Scrutiny Panels to discuss these recommendations?

Ministers have not appeared before a Scrutiny Panel to discuss these recommendations. The Scrutiny Panel in question discusses its forward working programme with relevant departments and these recommendations has never featured in those conversations latterly. I suspect the reason for this is that the States Assembly itself has been aware that the Andrew Williamson Inquiry was commissioned in August 2007 and was presented to the States Assembly in June 2008.

e) Is the Children's Executive satisfied that its decision has worked in practice in a way envisaged by the 'Bull' report?

Self evidently, R.89/2008 demonstrates that the Children's Executive has been very successful in delivering the major thrust of the Kathie Bull Report. The States should note this impressive record of achievement and I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all of the staff working in Children's Executive services for their professionalism and hard work over the years.

Notwithstanding this, the "Children's Executive Progress Report" – under cover of R.89/2008 – should be seen effectively as marking the end of an era as all services for children are now being redesigned to improve both managerial and political accountability as recommend by the Andrew Williamson inquiry.