

3. Oral Questions

3.1 Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Peter of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding full-time residents at Eden House:

In light of the ongoing presence of full-time residents at Eden House could the Minister explain what help, if any, is being offered to families who would usually receive respite at the centre?

Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier (Assistant Minister for Health and Social Services - rapporteur):

I would like to thank the team at Eden House who have provided a great response when in February we did have to take 2 young people into full-time care, and with this response and extra effort by the staff the respite to the rest of the families accessing Eden House has been very minimal.

3.1.1 The Deputy of St. Peter:

What will the Assistant Minister be doing to make sure that this access to respite is not minimal and is routine and predictable for the families?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

There are in place already some outreach in the community respite short breaks. We are opening another short-break house called The Haven and hopefully that will be ready next month, and this will be for short-term respite. It is unfortunate that we did not see another 2 families come in but it was not due to them not receiving respite care, it was something extended in their family support system.

3.1.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour:

What does the Assistant Minister mean by “very minimal”?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

That all the families that did access respite are still receiving respite, some maybe not as much as they did before, some are getting the same, some have not the same needs as others in the first place.

3.1.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

If they are not receiving as much as they received before could the Assistant Minister give examples of the shortfall that is occurring and whether these families have indeed complained about the limited facilities now available?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

I have spoken to the manager, and I cannot go into every individual case, when I say “minimal” sometimes they were accessing twice a week with an overnight stay, that may be now once a week. Individual cases are assessed on their basis and obviously family circumstances. I am sorry, I have forgotten the last part of the question.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Have any of the families complained about the decline in care?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

I did hear the Deputy of St. Peter on the radio and apparently she has been contacted by some families. Unfortunately, and I do not know why, they have not contacted myself, the Minister or the department. They... and I am told again, through the manager – who I have no reason to say is not telling the story exactly as it is - that on the main they are happy with the respite they are receiving due to the circumstances we have found ourself at Eden House.

[9:45]

3.1.4 Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier:

It seems to me that despite our report that we issued last year that the question of people with serious conditions, like autism, are still being let down by the Department of Health. In our report we have stated that the department has plenty of notice of those children in families that may require long-term care in the future, and it seems to be that the department just simply is not addressing the issue and families are being let down again and again and again. What assurances is the Assistant Minister going to give that this is going to be addressed once and for all so those families are not let down.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

The wording in the Deputy's question was "may" have needs in future. We do know the families who need access to respite. We do know the families. We do not know when and if a crisis will happen. We have 3 young people in the U.K. (United Kingdom) we need to bring back. We have plans in planning and hopefully this home will be ready in 2014. We now have another 2 who need full respite care, and this will be continual. As I have mentioned to the Deputy of St. Peter, we do not have a borough up the road that can help us if we are short on short-break respite, we are 9 by 5 and we have to deal with it the best we can.

3.1.5 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

The Assistant Minister said hopefully that this short-break home will be ready in 2014. "Hopefully" just is not good enough.

The Bailiff:

The question, Deputy?

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

The question is: we had the same situation with Oakwell when the department was aware of the number of children who were accessing respite at Oakwell and in the end we had the situation where we had older children living there almost permanently so newcomers into the system ...

The Bailiff:

The question?

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

So the question is: I am not assured by the comments that the Assistant Minister has just made that the problem is being addressed.

The Bailiff:

There is still no question there. [Laughter]

Deputy J.A. Martin:

I would just like to clarify to the Deputy, I said the home for short-term breaks will be ready hopefully next month, and it is called The Haven and I know the Deputy does know about it. The long term is taking longer. It is a facility for the care that is needed for people on the Autism to Asperberger's spectrum. The Deputy knows you just cannot take over a home or a house and say: "There it is, get on with it." It is an absolute dedicated design and that is what we were doing, and that is what I said will be ready for next year to bring back 3 young Jersey people to live back in Jersey.

3.1.6 Deputy J.G. Reed of St. Ouen:

Could the Assistant Minister confirm when the essential short-term respite levels will return to an appropriate state?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

As I say, if we can get this - which I am assured - we will have this The Haven up and running by next month that is when the short term will return to absolute normal, and if not increase, because we are working with Autism Jersey and other third sectors to do the outreach packages. We are already working with 4 young people and there are another 2 in the plans. One to cover, I think it is going to be a ... it is going to be a necessity over the half-term and for other people to perhaps have weekend breaks. So there is a lot of work going on, but the short-term, as soon as The Haven is up and running, will return to normal, which as I said, it is only very minimal that has been interrupted anyway.

3.1.7 The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Can the Assistant Minister confirm whether the users of these short-term respite services are aware of the efforts and the timing of the improvements?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Yes, because as I just said, we are working with 6 families, 4 and 2 young people out in the community, who are very happy that their needs are being met. Maybe not at Eden House. They all know that The Haven is coming and, as I said, I heard the Deputy of St. Peter, again on the radio, saying there is no short-term break respite. That is not the case.

3.1.8 The Deputy of St. Peter:

I would like to seek some clarification from the Assistant Minister. Her answers have been very helpful and it was particularly heartening to hear that The Haven will be coming online next month. I would like to seek assurances from the Assistant Minister that families are properly communicated with and understand the changes in the circumstances. The question really relates to a lack of communication and although they are aware that The Haven is coming online the people who have spoken to me have not been sure when that is happening and so I would like the Assistant Minister to give her assurance that communication with families will be improved.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Maybe the Deputy and myself have a different understanding of what the communication is. The team at Eden House who work with these families day-in/day-out, do communicate very well. Everything in my answers I have passed through the managers and the staff at Eden House and I feel that if there are families out there, and I said it last time about Oakwell, if there are any families in particular who feel that they are not being listened to or the communication is not as it should be, to ask permission that they speak to myself or the Minister so we can get to the root of the problem, because this is the only way we are going to deal with this. I probably disagree from the communication I see with the families down at Eden House and across the respite sector I think is very good, but everything, I agree with the Deputy, can be improved and if she would like to pass anything on to me so we can find out more I would be very grateful.