

20.09.22

18 Deputy K.G. Pamplin of the Minister for Children and Housing regarding islanders who are homeless or in emergency housing (OQ.239/2020):

Further to Oral Question 155/2020, will the Minister update the Assembly on the homelessness review and advise how many Islanders are currently either homeless or under emergency housing?

Senator S.Y. Mézec (The Minister for Children and Housing):

The most up-to-date figures that I can get the Deputy for the number of homeless people that we are aware of in Jersey come from Shelter Trust where, overnight on Monday, they were supporting 115 people across 8 sites, which includes 2 new sites which they opened during the pandemic. They are also supporting a further 12 people outside of their accommodation elsewhere in the community. Of course though that does not include figures that are extremely difficult to come by in terms of the unknown homelessness and the people who might be sofa surfing or living in very insecure conditions that meet the definition of homelessness. I can confirm that the homelessness review and strategy is due to be published in early October, which will be an important moment in drawing to our attention the things we need to do to help address this issue. But, irrespective of that, we are working with officers to include provisions for extra homelessness support in the next part of the Government Plan which will of course be published in due course.

4.18.1 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Would it surprise the Minister to say I have got the answer to my original question in front of me where he stated it in June, when I asked the question, that 114 persons were being looked after by the Trust. Just to be clear, he did state 12 extra people in other properties; so there has not been much movement and the same answer has been given in terms of the other numbers. How urgently is he treating this? We need to know the exact numbers from all the other charity groups and agencies so he can have a ballpark figure, regardless of waiting for the review. Does he agree how urgent this situation could be, especially after recent votes in this Assembly?

Senator S.Y. Mézec:

Yes, I obviously agree with that and I believe it has been treated with the sense of urgency that it ought to have been over recent months. Efforts were stepped up in a way that has never happened before in Jersey in providing support for homelessness cases, and on the Government's side bringing officers away from other work they were doing deliberately to help provide solutions for these people. We have had a huge amount of success in helping take people who face those urgent situations, which were exacerbated by the COVID crisis into not just emergency accommodation but permanent accommodation as well. As I said at the end of my answer to his first question, this has not stopped me putting forward proposals which will come to light when the Government Plan is published for some extra tangible support for homelessness that I hope the Assembly will want to approve wholeheartedly when it gets to it.

4.18.2 Deputy K.F. Morel:

Similarly in response to Deputy Pamplin's questions of a few months ago, I also asked the Minister what actions he had taken to reduce homelessness in Jersey. We can see that homelessness has not particularly reduced in Jersey. Would he be able to advise the Assembly, since the last time I asked this question, what actions has he taken that have directly impacted on homelessness in Jersey?

Senator S.Y. Mézec:

I do sort of feel like I have answered that question when Deputy Pamplin raised it in similar terms. So we have had several months of extraordinary circumstances where problems to do with homelessness basically have been exacerbated, partly because of Government requirements on how people could move, *et cetera*, and that an effort was stepped up to mitigate that as much as possible, which I consider to be a great success in the number of cases that came to us that we were able to find solutions to. That has provided a really good base then for looking to what will be a homelessness provision during normal times when there are not these sorts of restrictions. Just to add to that of course, we did also ban evictions during this time so just imagine how bad things might have been had we not done that. So given the extraordinary circumstances we have faced over recent months, I think the work that has been undertaken has been a success and I hope in the coming weeks when we can provide more detail on the new provisions I hope to be introducing once the Government Plan has been Assembly, that will show those further things we will be able to do.