

2021.10.05

10 Deputy K.F. Morel of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the availability of medical records to clinicians at the General Hospital (OQ.204/2021):

Will the Minister advise whether any staff shortages at the General Hospital have led to full medical records being unavailable to clinicians at any time during the past month and, if so, what action has been or will be taken to rectify this?

The Deputy of St. Ouen (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

There were 5 instances recorded in August of missing clinic files. Those cases are reported on Datex, which is the H.C.S. electronic incident reporting system. In part this was due to the fact that extra clinics were run in August in an effort to clear waiting lists and that placed additional pressure on the medical records team, but of course that is a good thing but creating pressure to other parts of the system. But, in part, also a review of all administrative functions within H.C.S. and across government led to greater use of bank staff with associated higher staff turnover. During August this combined with some staff sickness and annual leave being popular in August; this created those instances. The review is now complete and recruitment of permanent staff is underway.

4.10.1 Deputy K.F. Morel:

How long does the Minister believe it will take for the recruitment of permanent staff to be fully processed?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

We are hoping to have these posts filled by the end of the year. It is library and clinic clerks that we are seeking.

4.10.2 Deputy R.E. Huelin of St. Peter:

On the subject of medical records, I was wondering if the Minister could give us an update on when the project to have all medical records digitised will come to fulfilment and be operable.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes, I can do and it will largely be repeating a supplemental asked by Deputy Morel to an earlier question. But the paper records are going to be scanned into a dedicated platform, which will be integrated with the new electronic patient record system. The outline business case for this is complete and approved. A full business case needs to be drafted but this cannot be completed until the procurement exercise is complete. We will have the procurement completed before the end of this year and we expect a full business case to be completed in the first quarter of next year. Thereafter, we anticipate it will take 18 months to scan all the historic hospital records, meaning that the scanning and an electronic solution will be in place for the opening of the new hospital. I have got a little more detail but perhaps I will stop there.

The Bailiff:

Supplementary, the Deputy of St. Peter? Could you turn your microphone on?

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Sorry, Sir. Would you like me to start again?

The Bailiff:

I think we heard most of that but you were asking a supplemental question.

4.10.3 The Deputy of St. Peter:

I would just like an observation from the Minister for Health and Social Services as to how much further pressure he can put on to ensure this is delivered, not just in time for the hospital but for the benefit of all patients who need to know and have the assurance that they have up-to-date details, accurate records in a timely fashion when they are having any consultation with the various medical staff that need to help them with their particular ailment?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

It is absolutely recognised that this is a priority, not just for the new hospital where we absolutely cannot be carrying up cartloads of paper files to put in a basement. But this is a priority for the team working in the digital services. Money has been voted through the previous Government Plan - significant amounts of money - to make this happen. Government does recognise that it needs to happen and is doing it.

4.10.4 The Connétable of St. John:

The Minister referred to August whereas the question refers to the last month. Can the Minister confirm if there were any issues last week with records at the hospital, please?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I think August was given because the question was received in September, I think. Last week I do not know and I have not heard of any issues.

4.10.5 The Connétable of St. John:

Earlier today the Minister spoke about a business case being brought together for the records. He has just spoken about money being in the Government Plan. Can he confirm that funds are in place for this project?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

That is my understanding, this Assembly has approved that Government Plan.

4.10.6 Deputy K.F. Morel:

Indeed my request was that he did have September in mind. Would the Minister, please, be able to confirm that on 29th September or thereabouts clinicians were not able to gain full access to medical records and medical records were only being processed with the front sheet and, to quote, lined paper inside for the consultant to write? Can the Minister confirm that that did happen towards the end of September, quite possibly 29th September, and has he had any complaints with clinicians about the lack of records and have any patients been put in harm's way as a result of this lack of records?

[11:45]

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I have not been made aware of that. Clearly, the Deputy has heard something about it, so if he wishes to give me details of what he has heard I will look into it.