

21.12.13

11 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding home care (OQ.247/2021):

Will the Minister state how many people are currently receiving home care, how many healthcare assistants are providing such care, and the number of hours of care delivered? Will he indicate how these figures compare to those for 2019, pre-COVID, and will he advise what measures are being taken to ensure that more people who need access to home care are able to do so?

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

There is a lot of data requested by this question, but in fact it is not possible to give definitive figures relating to home care as many individuals are arranging and accessing care on a private basis. However, we do have details of those who are accessing home care through the long-term care scheme. At the end of 2019 there were a total of 478 long-term care claims for domiciliary care and as at 8th December this year there are 570 of those claims. The Deputy has asked about the number of hours of care delivered and, of course, we can only say that as what is billed through the long-term care scheme. That was 19,589 in 2019 and 29,391 so far in 2021, so that is a significant increase in hours of care provided. The Deputy may have heard of the recent help at home scheme that has been launched. H.C.S. is working with 17 partners in the domiciliary care sector. They were asked to provide information on their staffing capacity in terms of their number of employees and vacancies. In October this year 974 employees were recorded. However, they are not all home care assistants as this total is made up of home care assistants and healthcare professionals; 126 vacancies were recorded at the time of submission. Of course, this does not include all home care providers but only those who are part of the help at home scheme. The Deputy asked what measures are being taken and I would refer him to the help at home scheme funded by the Fiscal Stimulus Fund, £621,000 investment to grow the home care sector and support it with a recruitment campaign. It is producing results and it is a continuing campaign.

3.11.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Yes. I hear the words "is producing results", this new mechanism, but does the Minister not accept, given his previous answer to the previous question, that there is a shortage of qualified staff available to fill these positions and this is a fundamental aim of the Jersey Care Model to deliver more support in the community rather than in care homes?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes, I said there is at the moment a shortage of staff and the sector is feeling that. I think this has primarily arisen as a result of Brexit. The sector was reliant on a number of workers who came from eastern Europe and many of those do not seem to be in the Island anymore, which is why we are seeking local recruits. It is a valuable and rewarding sector to work in, but it is hard work and it is not everyone's cup of tea. I know those who do work in it are dedicated and hardworking. We do need to resource that sector and much thought is going into how that will happen over the longer term.

3.11.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Given the reinstatement of COVID regulations allowing care providers to use staff to perform tasks that are usually carried out by more experienced staff, is this affecting the number of qualified healthcare assistants available and providing a service?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

No, I do not believe those temporary measures are affecting the number of staff available. Clearly, the staff are there. Well, sorry, the agencies, by which I mean the employers, are working with the staff available to them and managing their workload.

3.11.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

I suppose the question is: does this care order extend to homecare providers and will the costs of those receiving care remain the same from other private providers, given that they may be receiving care from less experienced staff in this interim period of the COVID regulation being enforced?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

The order is made by the Minister for the Environment. Just at the moment I am not totally sure it extends to domiciliary care providers, so I do not want to mislead the Assembly if I get that wrong, I am sorry.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Sir, I wonder if we could have an answer to that in some way because I think it is relevant to this question, but thank you.

The Bailiff:

Are you able to provide ...

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes, Sir, I will ask those listening to come back to me, to the Assembly, to say precisely what the order covers.

3.11.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

It seems to me that the Minister has effectively stated that he cannot make a comparison between this year and 2019, before COVID, because he does not know the figures and that his department has withdrawn from measuring those figures to see if we are succeeding in our primary aim of delivering care in people's homes through the Jersey Care Model. Is that not the case?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Not at all. We have been able to make a comparison with the 2019 figures that come through the long-term care scheme, and that is all we can access because the Deputy will understand that some people seek private care and Government does not get involved with that. So we cannot know or quantify what is being delivered privately. Thank you; that is all I can answer.