

**QUESTION TO BE ASKED OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON TUESDAY 30th MARCH 2004, BY DEPUTY J.L. DOREY OF ST. HELIER**

Question

Would the President inform the Assembly why it is intended to reduce spending on the methadone programme from £205,000 in 2005, to £153,390 in 2006, and to £115,000 in 2007?

Answer

It is not intended to reduce spending on the methadone programme over the period described.

The addition of an alternative drug, Subutex, to the treatment programme may have caused some confusion in the recent States debate of the Safer Society Strategy. The Strategy perhaps should have referred to the treatment programme rather than the Methadone Programme because the programme now incorporates both Methadone and Subutex as treatment options; Subutex being used for addicts who for clinical reasons cannot respond to Methadone as the substitute drug of withdrawal.

As members will recall Objective 5 of Strategic Priority 3 of the Building a Safer Society Strategy is to 'continually review evidence based interventions in order to extend the range and availability of options for problematic drug users'. The initiatives described below the objective refer to both a Methadone Programme and a Subutex Programme. Both are drugs used to help addicts to withdraw from the use of heroin.

Methadone is presently the main drug used on the treatment programme but Subutex is now being trialled as an alternative for those heroin addicts for whom methadone is not a suitable means of withdrawal.

In fact, the Methadone element of the treatment programme increases slightly during the three years in question, with £105,000 inscribed for 2005, £110,000 for 2006 and £115,000 for 2007. What may have confused members is the addition of funding for Subutex in 2005 and 2006 of £100,000 and £43,000 respectively. This will allow the trials of Subutex in the treatment programme to be concluded. If, as anticipated, Subutex proves to be an effective substitute to methadone for some heroin addicts seeking treatment, then recurring funding for the new drug will be sought as part of the Health and Social Services Committee's revenue budget for 2007 and beyond.