

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 1st MAY 2007

Question

- a) Would the Minister inform members –
- (i) what proportion of the £2.5 million required to fund the 2007 States employees' pay award his department has had to absorb?
 - (ii) what measures have been taken to meet this additional cost?
 - (iii) whether such actions amount to service cuts or delays in certain activities, and
- b) Would the Minister place these in context of measures already taken in response to the need for efficiency savings for 2007?

Answer

- a) (i) The Health and Social Services Department is required to find the sum of £980,000 as its pro-rata contribution to fund the 2007 States employees' pay award. This is a non-recurring contribution.
- (ii) Four actions have been taken to make this contribution while at the same time minimising the impact on front line services for patients and clients.

The first action was for the Health and Social Services Department to surrender the sum of £428,000 from contingencies and from an 'invest to save scheme'. The latter is an innovative scheme which was introduced last year which seeks to pump prime significant cash releasing efficiency schemes and then 'reward' the particular innovative department by letting it have a 'share' in that efficiency saving for investment in equipment, professional training or other general improvements in a particular service.

The second action was to reschedule £120,000 of minor maintenance schemes.

The third action was to put on hold until January 2008 some infrastructure developments, but included also here was a vision screening Royal National Institute for the Blind Social Worker, an appointment to which was expected in September 2007. For this now intervening period (September 2007 to September 2008) this service will receive social worker support from the general Social Work Department.

The fourth action has been to use gift funds to support some minor capital works and to fund a specific emergency surgical need which was otherwise to be funded from the departmental budget. This emergency surgical need is the funding of bariatric surgery, which I recognise the Deputy takes a very close interest in. The use of the gift fund for these purposes is appropriate as it is a gift left for the benefit of patients at the General Hospital.

- (iii) As the £980,000 would otherwise have been used to support new services for clients and patients, it must follow that the removal of such a sum of money does represent a cut in service. However, my staff have been studious and diligent to ensure that any impact on front line services is mitigated. As to the delay in such matters as minor capital works, there is always the risk that rescheduling these

items to the next year creates the risk of break down or a general depletion in the quality in the living environment of patients and clients.

- b) In addition to this £980,000 contribution to the 2007 States employees pay award, Health and Social Services was tasked with releasing £948,500 as part of the efficiency savings for this year.

Health and Social Services has to manage a wide range of financial challenges which is why the Department is very fortunate to have a Finance Department which has such a high level of professional skill and expertise – with individuals from this Department able to work shoulder to shoulder with service managers and clinical leaders. The world of health and social care spending is characterised by high inflation in pharmaceuticals and other technologies, the cost of securing and rewarding highly skilled health and social care professionals in a challenging global labour market, and the cost of highly specialist treatments (which in the Jersey context translate into treatment on the mainland). Health and Social Services must also meet the challenges placed upon it by the ageing of the population – the demographic time bomb as it is more commonly called. It is axiomatic that the cost of health and social care to older people can be as much as four times more than for a younger person aged under 65 years. The further challenges of meeting the 2007 pay award and efficiency savings must be seen in the context of these other financial cost pressures.

If the Deputy would wish for a line by line statement and detailed explanation of the four actions referred to in a)(ii) above, then I will be very pleased to provide this for him via a meeting with my senior officers.