

**2.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the workings of political and administrative accountability with regard to the allegations made about Child Care in the Island:**

What conclusions, if any, has the Minister reached in relation to the workings of political and administrative accountability with regard to the allegations made about childcare in the Island?

**Senator B.E. Shenton (The Minister for Health and Social Services):**

I have read this question a few times and I was wondering if the Deputy may be permitted to elaborate on exactly what question he is asking me, Sir, so that I may reply?

**Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

The question has gone around slightly, hence the fact it has ended up on the Minister's desk but I will attempt to draw out its meaning. Is the Minister satisfied, Sir, that within his Ministry, there is strong administrative accountability in terms of the officers who are in charge of a critical area such as childcare? Secondly, Sir - and in a way this is asking about himself - is he convinced that the manner in which he is held accountable for the performance of that particular function is strong and that we, as an Assembly, have enough information and that he has enough information to be politically accountable?

**Senator B.E. Shenton:**

As Minister for Health and Social Services, I have specific responsibilities, not only with my Ministerial household but also through the Children's (Jersey) Law 2002. In order to uphold those responsibilities I have a very able Assistant Minister - Senator Perchard - who has been given responsibilities on the Social Services side. Having said that, ultimate political responsibility lies with myself. To achieve that, I have given written direction to my Chief Officer of the standards that I would expect him to uphold within the Children's Service. While I have passed on responsibility in certain areas to Senator Perchard, I do still keep a close eye on what is going on in Social Services. To give you an example, I telephoned a local children's home last week and spoke to the manager just to make sure that the children under our care were not being adversely affected by the recent events going on in the Island.

**2.2.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

I thank the Minister for that. I wonder if he could elaborate on what kind of information he receives which makes him feel confident that he and his Assistant Minister have a complete overview and a complete understanding of what is going on in terms of childcare?

**Senator B.E. Shenton:**

We currently have the Williamson Review being undertaken plus other reviews taking place. As a Minister, not just in Social Services but throughout Health and Social Services, I am very keen to have independent input into the services that we provide in many, many areas. This is a very high priority at Health and Social Services at the moment, to provide me with more independent findings so that I do not have to rely on the word of my Chief Officer or the word of the staff, so that I can have independent verification of all aspects of Health and Social Services.

**2.2.2 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:**

At the Williamson briefing the other morning, where the Minister was present and so was I and other Members, I made the point about the line reporting and the necessity - an essential aspect - of political oversight. Is the Minister confident that the line reporting is satisfactory within the Ministry and is he actively encouraging staff to speak to him and his Assistant Minister directly if they have an issue?

**Senator B.E. Shenton:**

I am taking the final point first, Senator Perchard and myself, we do speak to staff in confidence on various issues, just to get feedback. With regard to lines of responsibility, there are areas that we need to address because ultimately you cannot have more than one person responsible for any particular area and you have to have political responsibility and managerial responsibility in every area of the department.

### **2.2.3 Deputy F.J. Hill of St. Martin:**

It has been reported that there are no occupants at all at Greenfields. Will the Minister confirm that is a fact? If so, has it got anything to do with the Williamson Report, i.e. with any concerns raised that would mean that there are no longer any people there at Greenfields?

### **Senator B.E. Shenton:**

As far as I am aware, there are no people at Greenfields but it does not have anything to do with the Williamson Report. It just means that we do not have any people remanded to Greenfields at the moment.

### **2.2.4 Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville:**

The Minister answered a question just now; children under our care. When Mr. Williamson answered a question or tried to answer a question posed by Deputy Mezbourian at the briefing last week, when he was asked: "When a child absconds from one of the children's homes who is responsible?" He replied by saying: "I am not a lawyer. It is complicated." Who does the Minister feel or believe is responsible for children under their care?

### **Senator B.E. Shenton:**

If a child absconds while under our care, he is still under our care and this is an area where Senator Perchard and I do have concerns and, as I have previously answered, we have spoken to the Attorney General on it. But it is of great concern to us because ultimately that child is under our care.

### **2.2.5 The Deputy of Grouville:**

Is it not of concern to the Minister that Mr. Williamson finds this area complicated and does not exactly know what that means, children under our care?

### **Senator B.E. Shenton:**

I am not quite sure what the Deputy means by that.

### **The Deputy of Grouville:**

Well, the Minister seems to know what it means "children under our care", but Mr. Williamson does not. It does not concern him.

### **Senator B.E. Shenton:**

That would be a better question to put to Mr. Williamson. I cannot speak for Mr. Williamson.

### **2.2.6 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

Notwithstanding some of the heartening information that the Minister has conveyed, could the Minister outline, other than private chats with he and the Assistant Minister, what secure arrangements are in place if there is a whistle-blower who wishes to convey information?

### **Senator B.E. Shenton:**

I believe that the States has an ongoing whistle-blowing policy. There is not a policy specific to Health and Social Services but certainly it is an area which is covered by States Employment.