

2.17 Deputy T.M. Pitman of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding retention of nursing staff:

Despite the recent £1 million voted to her department to improve recruitment, would the Minister inform the Assembly whether the current problem facing nursing is not in fact one of recruitment but retention as a result of pay awards failing to keep pace with Jersey's high cost of living?

The Deputy of Trinity (Minister for Health and Social Services):

For clarity, the additional £1.1 million investment is needed to increase the nursing staffing levels in key areas across the service. The money will be invested in nurse posts across critical care, accident and emergency, medical and surgical wards and the children's ward. This much needed investment is to start to bring nursing staffing levels up to a level that meets the demand. Good staffing levels play an important role, not only providing a safe level of care but also in our ability to recruit and retain staff. The impact of this investment will mean better levels of staffing and hence a predicted improvement in the recruitment of nurses and a reduction in nurses leaving. The reason nurses leave Jersey are many and complex. We offer exit interviews to all our staff to try and ascertain their reasons for leaving the organisation. Findings from these interviews demonstrate a range of reasons, including moving to be nearer to family, accommodation issues both in Jersey and I stress also in the U.K., childcare costs, lack of extended family support and promotion, for example. In relation to the question linked with pay awards, I am not in a position to answer that question as it is a matter for the States Employment Board.

2.17.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

In light of what the Minister has just told the House, will she really not concede that as pay has in real terms fallen behind that of the U.K. that this is a major, major reason for nurses leaving and recruiting staff, admirable as that is, and needed as that is, it will have no other impact than to put off matters for a matter of months?

The Deputy of Trinity:

As I have said, the issues are many and they are very complex. It is not just one thing. It is a multitude of things, like accommodation, both over here and in the U.K. because nurses who are coming over here perhaps cannot sell their house in the U.K. or perhaps cannot rent them. The area of accommodation I know has been discussed with the Minister for Housing and he is very supportive. So, just to stress, there is not just one issue.

2.17.2 Deputy A.E. Jeune of St. Brelade:

Just listening to the Minister's answer there, did I hear correctly that the monies that have been awarded are to be used for the general and acute area? Would the Minister confirm that she is satisfied with the staffing levels in terms of the elderly and psychiatry?

The Deputy of Trinity:

There are all areas and in the nursing staff review they identified 35 areas across the service but these ones I mentioned are the first tranche which is high priority because they are in an acute setting.

2.17.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Minister come to the House with a comprehensive, quantitative and anonymised version of the reasons for nurses leaving the profession, as she currently has them?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I think I have done that many times. As I have said in my question, they are childcare costs, accommodation costs and also the costs of accommodation that the people may leave in the U.K. What has come out just fairly recently is that somebody wanted to come over here but their partner was in a good job in the U.K. and, because of the job market in the U.K., they felt it was important to stay put for job security.

2.17.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

I repeat my question again; will the Minister come to the House with information which will enable this House to judge whether measures being taken to improve recruitment and retention are successful, including some form of summary document which summarises the reasons for nurses leaving in some sort of quantitative way? Furthermore, I am glad to see that she refers ...

The Bailiff:

That was your question, Deputy.

The Deputy of Trinity:

I can do but for the last 5 weeks I have been saying the same thing; that they are complex but, if the Deputy wants that, then that is fine; I shall do a brief report.

2.17.5 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

The Minister recently informed Scrutiny that there were problems with retention and engagement of staff in the nursing line and she felt that a good amount of that was through the cost of accommodation and the cost of living and childcare in Jersey. Does she feel that anything has changed in the short space of time that will enable her to be able to employ more nursing staff and retain the nursing staff as to accommodation, childcare costs and the cost of living in Jersey?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Again, I stress that it is complex and it is not just one issue. What has made a tremendous difference is the States support of the extra £1.1 million and the investment over 3 years. After the States support I did go around most of the wards in the hospital and they were very appreciative, also saying that it will help them enormously. As regarding the other issues, I have forgotten what the question was now.

The Bailiff:

That is it. Very well, Deputy Pitman, do you want to ask the final question?

2.17.6 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Just a quick one; could the Minister just confirm that when she has this money in place for additional recruitment, and that is working, will she then come back to the House and provide figures so that the House can see how matters have improved on staffing levels and safety levels?

The Deputy of Trinity:

So, it is in addition to the other report that Deputy Southern wanted. Yes, but I also say that the nurses have been under tremendous pressure and I would ...

The Bailiff:

I think it is either yes or it is no, Minister.

The Deputy of Trinity:

Sorry.