

The Deputy Bailiff:

We come to oral questions and the first oral question is in the name of the Deputy of St. John of the Minister for Economic Development.

Deputy P.J. Rondel of St. John:

I would like to withdraw this question at this time and it will come up at a future debate. Thank you.

4.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the policy in respect of private work undertaken by Hospital consultants:

Is the Minister satisfied with current policy in respect of private work undertaken by hospital consultants?

Senator J.L. Perchard (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

I am satisfied that the long-standing arrangements in place work well and are of benefit to both public and private patients. As we are a community with only one general hospital it makes good sense to use the facilities that we have for the benefit of all Islanders who require treatment. Health and Social Services derive an annual income of approximately £3 million from private patient services and this resource is ploughed back into improving patient services for everyone. Within the terms of service outlined in consultants' contracts an allowance is made in respect of their on-call commitments, for them to take time off to undertake private work. The service is proud of the very significant achievements made in abolishing waiting times for periods in excess of 3 months. In reality this means that the vast majority of public patients are seen within weeks, rather than months. Many Islanders will be aware of this from their own experiences. These achievements have been made possible through the hard work and commitment of many staff, ensuring that urgent, soon and routine cases are not compromised within the current system. The co-existence of public and private patient care works well and very importantly - very importantly - continues to be a factor that attracts high calibre clinicians to live and work in Jersey.

4.1.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Notwithstanding the recitation of all the achievements of the Health Service, would the Minister acknowledge that defects in the system were demonstrated in a recent court case and would he not acknowledge that this is one of the areas where in order to restore public confidence he needs to revamp the whole system?

Senator J.L. Perchard:

I will be announcing later this morning my intentions to hold an inquiry into the situation regarding the fallout from the recent court case and if the Deputy is patient we can explore the matter further then. However if and when time permits I will be meeting with all those involved in providing care to the people of Jersey and discussing with them their roles in the provision of this care.

4.1.2 Senator S. Syvret:

Could the Minister explain what the current procedures are for enforcing and monitoring the split between private work and public work undertaken by consultants and indeed monitoring how much of the public work is undertaken by the consultants themselves or their juniors or locums?

Senator J.L. Perchard:

The procedures have been updated of late and there is a sophisticated matrix system being used, the detail of which would need to be presented to the Senator in a form that I am unable to give, but there is a more sophisticated system to ensure that consultants are delivering the amount of public private partnership that has been agreed with them when they were commissioned.

4.1.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the Minister confirm that notwithstanding the rightful need to attract consultants, that the hours paid for for public work are being worked to the full continuously and that there is no dereliction in this regard?

Senator J.L. Perchard:

As I said earlier to the questioner, I will when time permits be making the rounds of all those providing healthcare to the people of Jersey and I will be exploring the issues such as that just raised by the Member. I am not able to categorically stand here and say: "Everything in the garden is rosy." I have been in this position but weeks but I shall endeavour to ensure that best and proper service is provided to the people of Jersey.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Sorry, could the Minister say "yes" or "no", having been Assistant Minister for a lengthy period as well?

Senator J.L. Perchard:

No, I am not able to say "yes" or "no".