

### **2.13 Deputy T.M. Pitman of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding nursing staff working back-to-back day and night shifts:**

Will the Minister advise whether on occasion nursing staff have had to work a night shift straight after the completion of their day shift? If so, does she consider this to be good or satisfactory health and safety practice and would she further advise whether any such individual would be supported by the department in event of an accident or tragedy occurring as a result?

#### **Deputy A.E. Pryke of Trinity (The Minister for Health and Social Services):**

I am not aware of any instances whereby nursing staff employed by my department have had to work a night shift straight after completion of their day shift, however I am personally aware of instances whereby nursing staff have been extremely flexible in supporting the service in times of sudden staff shortages, to their credit and very much appreciated at maintaining central services. Extended additional shift requests are only made after all other avenues have been exhausted such as seeking bank or agency staff and most typically this occurs because of sickness. This may involve a nurse either extending their shift for a period of a few hours or going home to rest and return later in the day. All extra hours undertaken by staff are negotiated with their manager. To my knowledge no nurse is forced to work hours beyond those which they choose to do. Nursing staff who work extra hours can do so on the bank, as overtime, or claim time owing. I do not consider the practice of nursing staff working a night shift straight after the completion of their day shift a good or satisfactory health and safety practice. I cannot condone it. I support the practice of minimum rest periods and assure the Deputy that Health and Social Services Department staff managers work hard to support their staff at all times and even more so in times when the service is under great pressure. My department would always support staff working flexibly within the service and in the event of an unfortunate accident or a tragedy occurring as a result of an instance the Deputy describes, the organisation would support the individual. This liability, however, cannot extend to additional duties and agency work they may perform for other organisations in the private sector. Lastly, I must add that members of staff themselves have a professional responsibility under the code of the Nursing and Midwifery Council to ensure that they are fit for practice each time they come on duty.

#### **2.13.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:**

A supplementary? Thank you. Had the Minister attended the meeting with staff representatives but only 10 States Members did attend, I have to say that she might have learnt that this information was given direct by a health employee that this has indeed happened; the night shift, straight after a day shift. In light of that can the Minister give us assurances that this will not happen again in future?

#### **The Deputy of Trinity:**

I am not aware, as I said, of any incidents with nursing staff and if the Deputy has that information, I would appreciate it.

#### **2.13.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

In the written answer in question 24 today, the Minister suggested or stated that data is held on all Health and Social Services staff in relation to contracted hours and the overtime they may have worked in a given period but she says it would require significant resources to undertake a survey to find out how many hours are being

worked. Will she undertake to do so because I believe it is a vital issue of health and safety?

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

I am concerned and, as I said in my answer, I cannot condone it. I am very much aware that nurses have worked extra hours. This is in negotiation with their manager and that is very important. Also, I stress, under their code of practice, they have to show that they are fit for duty.

**2.13.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Will the Minister come to the House with the research that defines the depth of this problem?

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

Just to confirm, I am not too sure what the Deputy requires; the problem that is occurring with nurses working night shift and then day shift? Was that what he is asking me to do?

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

What I am seeking to do is to obtain the figures which indicate the extent to which long working hours are the current practice among staff employed by the Minister for Health and Social Services today. She says she has the data but it requires some effort in order to organise that data to state the extent of the problem; long working hours. Will she come to the House with the data that can define the size of this problem?

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

We know that there is a problem with staff working long hours and that is the most important thing, with the Business Plan, with the amendments to get extra funds for the staff to get more nurses. I do not understand what that would achieve.

**The Bailiff:**

I am sorry but we need to move on. Do you want a final question, Deputy Pitman? The Deputy of St. Martin then, if Deputy Pitman is not going to.

**2.13.4 The Deputy of St. Martin:**

All I was going to ask the Minister was that surely these figures are collated by the managers and all the managers have to do is put them together. Surely it should not take a lot of extra work.

**The Deputy of Trinity:**

As I said in my written answer, a significant resource would be needed but the most important thing is that the managers ... all overtime is worked in negotiation with the managers and they either have that paid as overtime or as time owed in lieu. I am not aware, as I said, of anybody working those hours but if the Deputy knows anything different then I will be pleased to know about it.