

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS
BY DEPUTY M. TADIER OF ST. BRELADE
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 28th SEPTEMBER 2010**

Question

“In the context of the recent situation where a diagnosed schizophrenic was 'reluctantly' sent to prison by the court because no other suitable facility was available, will the Minister advise where the individual, in this particular case, should have been sent, why he was not and whether the Minister considers that this is satisfactory?

Will he also advise what steps, if any, he is taking to resolve this situation and/or similar situations happening again?”

Answer

Sentencing policy is a matter for the courts.

There are difficulties in Jersey in this area, which are caused by the familiar problem of a small jurisdiction not being able to provide the full range of services which would be provided in a larger jurisdiction. This particularly applies in the area of secure accommodation for psychiatrically ill offenders. In the UK there are a number of levels of security for such people from Rampton and Broadmoor down to low levels of security.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that prisoners who are suffering from mental illness and are taking medication may be well for long periods of time. If they become ill then arrangements are made for them to be temporarily transferred to a psychiatric hospital under prison guard. The big area of difficulty arises in relation to psychiatric prisoners who are ill for most of the time. In recent years the position has improved with a number of these having been transferred to secure psychiatric hospitals in the UK. In recent years there has also been an improvement in services within the prison.

The prison has a Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist who visits the prison on a weekly basis to carry out assessments and provide professional care and support. The prison also benefits from the services of a Community Psychiatric Nurse who attends one day per week to manage a prisoner case load and three of the Prison's nurse officers are Registered Psychiatric Nurses. Most prisoners with a history of mental illness are kept stable by the administration of appropriate medication.

I have, in the past, held meetings with the Minister for Health and Social Services to discuss this issue and it is the subject of ongoing discussions. Although the current situation is not ideal, I accept that it is the best which can be provided within the available resources.