

3.11 Deputy M. Tadier of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the accommodation of vulnerable children:

Following the news that a child with liver damage from alcohol abuse, who had not attended school for 18 months and was also the alleged victim of sexual abuse, had to be locked-up because no appropriate accommodation was available, will the Minister inform Members whether she considers the situation satisfactory and what steps, if any, she has already taken to ensure this does not happen again?

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

I would ask my Assistant Minister to answer the question ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sir, I think I specifically asked for the Minister to answer this in person when I submitted the question.

The Bailiff:

Greffier, is that right, was it a specific question?

The Deputy of Trinity:

It was just the other question, Sir ...

The Bailiff:

We are just checking whether there was a specific request in relation to this question.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sir, to facilitate procedure I will be happy to, on this occasion, receive an answer from the Assistant Minister but I do generally ask for and expect indeed for questions to be answered by Ministers and not the Assistants.

The Bailiff:

Very well. I will ask the Assistant Minister then to answer on this occasion.

Deputy J.A. Martin (Assistant Minister for Health and Social Services - rapporteur):

Thank you and he probably will not be very happy on this occasion with my answer either. Given the question and the identifying factors in it I refer the Deputy to question 5638 and basically I wish the Deputy had asked a policy question and I would be able to answer it. I cannot put any more answers to this question because of the identifying facts and if the Deputy thinks he can refer to a question that I can answer I will be more than happy to do so. Thank you.

3.11.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

With due respect this question and any answer does in no way identify the child. The question itself is in order and I would expect that the Assistant Minister should be able to answer in a way which does not identify the child. The question I want to ask and I refer to the court judgment of 7th September which basically notes the dissatisfaction and frustration of the court and then it asks later on: "We hope that the Minister will make inquiries and ensure that the court is not again placed in such a position of having to make such an order." Simply my question is similar; can the Assistant Minister, on behalf of the Minister, give an assurance that we, as States of

Jersey but also the court, will not be put in such a situation again because suitable accommodation is not available?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Well, we do have a difference of opinion of what identifies a child and what does not identify a child. There is also a difference of opinion of whether the court was put in an embarrassing situation, as the Deputy said. Maybe the children's services were not given ... advice was not taken. I mean we do have a facility which is now Greenfields. The Children's Service have to weigh-up whether they think a secure order for a child ... and this is the best place for them because they may be self-harming or there may be other difficulties ... a fantastic facility and then we have the courts, who always have to weigh-up, what is the rights of the individual and this is where we are. This begs a bigger question and I still cannot answer the Deputy's specific question pertaining to this case. Thank you.

3.11.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

If I may, again, this is complete nonsense. I do not know why the Assistant Minister continues in this shroud-waving. We are not talking about specific details. We are talking about the direction of the court and the Minister's response, which in no way identifies any individual. Will the Assistant Minister respond and does she agree with the statement of the court that such accommodation should not be used because there is no other available accommodation for children in the care of the Minister? Does she agree with the statement that the court was put in an invidious position to the same extent the Health Department was also put in an invidious position? Will she give assurances that the department is going to work on this so that we are not put in this position again?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

I am sorry, the Deputy does keep referring to this particular case and he wants me to answer; was the court put in an embarrassing situation or was Health? There could be very, very difficult decisions to be made in any case and I can only generalise. I am sorry, I am not prepared to say anything more. The questions the Deputy is asking now may not be able to identify an individual but there are 3 identifying factors in this question and if you are a family or friend of this person you will know who they are. I do not think the Deputy's question is any help in any way. Thank you.

The Bailiff:

Very well, we will move on to the next question which the Deputy of St. Martin will ask of the Minister for Treasury and Resources.

The Deputy of Trinity:

Sorry, the request was only made for the respite question that I should answer it.

The Bailiff:

Yes, I have been given the same message that the Deputy only asked that you specifically deal with the Oakwell question. Very well, we come to question 12 which the Deputy of St. Martin will ask of the Minister for Treasury and Resources.