

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

Question

Will the Minister advise the age of the child suffering with 'serious' liver damage from alcohol abuse who has not been to school for 18 months and is the alleged victim of years of sexual abuse has had to be 'locked up' because no suitable accommodation is available?

Will she advise where this child would have been admitted to under normal circumstances and explain - in detail- why this was not possible on this occasion?

Answer

States Members are reminded of the following requirement which appears in paragraph 8 of the Code of Conduct -.

"... members should not disclose publicly, or to any third party, personal information about named individuals which they receive in the course of their duties unless it is clearly in the wider public interest to do so. Elected members must at all times have regard to all relevant data protection, human rights and privacy legislation when dealing with confidential information and be aware of the consequences of breaching confidentiality."

It is my opinion that any further disclosure of information in relation to this case or the individual concerned serves no public interest and indeed would only increase the risk of causing significant damage to the individual in addition to adding to the potential for their personal identification.

Whilst matters of policy should quite rightly be exercised in the public domain, it is unhelpful for individual cases of such sensitivity and complexity to be the subject of a public running commentary.

If I were to provide the information requested I would, in my opinion, be acting contrary to the Code of Conduct and would risk breaching the duty of care owed to this individual to promote their welfare and as such I am not prepared to release the information requested.

I am however, pleased to provide Members with confirmation of the range of accommodation available to vulnerable young people in need. In terms of children's homes La Preference provides for older young people 14 plus, whilst Heathfield focuses on a small number in the younger age group and the White House is a small therapeutic unit. Added to this is the availability of supported accommodation at St Mark's Hostel and through our partner agency the Jersey Association for Youth and Friendship. In addition we have access to rented accommodation in the public and private sector for young people supported by the Care Leaving Team or other community based staff. These services are complemented by a range of foster placements, used primarily though not exclusively for younger children.

In terms of plans for the future, the Brig-y-Don premises will shortly be re-designed and re-furbished to create a new fit for purpose setting, facilitating the closure of one of the existing homes which is no longer appropriate for the provision of residential care to modern day standards. In addition, the old Les Chenes building is shortly to be developed into 6 purpose built bed sit units for young people moving towards independence.

As members will see, there is a substantial range of accommodation available now, with further improvements coming on line in the near future. However, that accommodation needs to be carefully matched to the child who requires it, taking into account not only their own needs but those of existing residents. The risk of unjustifiable

disruption to the hard won stability of an existing resident group must be weighed in the balance, as must the risk to the new resident of exposure to adverse influence if joining a group of residents whose behaviours remain challenging and unstable. The specific vulnerabilities, wishes and feelings of all the individuals involved and the capacity of the care team to meet any specialist needs identified, must be carefully assessed and where necessary mitigated before a placement can be made. It is for this reason that, notwithstanding the good and growing range of placement alternatives which exist, it is not always possible to immediately access an appropriate setting, and there are equally times when an identified setting suddenly becomes unavailable because of the greater need of another child. I can assure members that when such difficulties arise, my officers work swiftly and creatively to promptly identify and put in place appropriate alternatives.