

3.19 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding Valerie Band House:

Will the Minister - Assistant Minister, I assume - inform Members what service is provided by the workshop at Valerie Band House within St. Saviour's Hospital and state whether it is intended to close this facility and, if so, why?

The Bailiff:

In accordance with Standing Order 64A the Assistant Minister is able to answer this in the absence of the Minister.

Deputy E.J. Noel of St. Lawrence (Assistant Minister for Health and Social Services - rapporteur):

The current workshop at Valerie Band House remains open and is currently used by H.S.S.D. (Health and Social Services Department) staff to make or mend occupational therapy equipment, for example, wheelchair ramps. However, Deputy Southern is concerned with a C.S.R. action and I am able to provide Members with the following information: a furniture repair project providing occupational therapy for approximately 6 to 8 clients used to operate from the workshop until the staff member running this project retired. The clients are being supported to becoming engaged in other alternative activities. These include activities run by the Jersey Employment Trust and working along H.S.S.D. staff to make and mend the occupational therapy equipment. There are currently no plans to close this workshop facility.

3.19.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

I am amazed by that answer, since I have a document in front of me that says: "Original S10, close Valerie Band House 2011 C.S.R. work streams financial performance monitoring." Can the Assistant Minister justify his statement that there is no intention to close this facility, when the 8 clients who use this facility and who are finding it very supportive have been told that it will close on 14th June?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I can repeat that the workshop itself will not be closing. The project for the 6 to 8 clients came to its natural end, because the person providing that service retired. Those clients have been supported to take up alternative activities provided by H.S.S.D. staff and also by the Jersey Employment Trust.

[11:45]

When our C.S.R. projects were initially scoped it was estimated that a £45,000 saving might be made in this area. On further investigation, this proved not to be the case and a smaller sum has been realised. So that is the ongoing process of C.S.R. We looked at this area, scoped it, realised that the initial savings were not going to be made, but some savings would, albeit more modest ones, have been able to be achieved by this opportunity when this individual retired.

3.19.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Just to clarify then the Assistant Minister is saying that the workshop is not closing, but the staff member who will be retiring will no longer be there, so there will not be a staff member. All the current users of that facility will no longer be using that facility, but the workshop itself is going to stay open. Is that economically viable to have a workshop stay open when nobody is using it?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

I fear that Members are simply not listening. The workshop remains open. H.S.S.D. staff are there, maintaining occupational therapy equipment. They are creating new equipment in the form of, for example, wheelchair ramps. What has ceased is the client area, whereby 6 to 8 clients were in a furniture manufacturing project. That project has come to the end of its natural life and those individuals are being supported to take up alternative and similar activities elsewhere.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

That is straightforwardly misleading, Sir.

The Bailiff:

I will come back to you at the end, Deputy. Deputy Jeune?

3.19.3 Deputy A.E. Jeune:

Can I ask the Assistant Minister, am I correct in understanding, because I have been listening, that the Assistant Minister is saying that the workshop will continue to employ Health and Social Services staff, but will not provide the therapeutic environment for those persons who were benefiting probably at no financial cost to his department from this facility?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

No. What I am saying is that a particular part of the project, which is the furniture manufacturing, has ceased. Those clients that were using that part of the facility are still having occupational therapy on the repair side of that facility. But in addition to that they are being supported to take alternative occupational therapy provided by the likes of the Jersey Employment Trust.

3.19.4 Deputy A.E. Jeune:

As a supplementary, is the Assistant Minister assuring the Members of this Assembly that the persons who are currently getting a therapeutic working environment in this particular site now will continue to have this, but it will be elsewhere? Is he assuring us that these persons will still have a therapeutic environment to go to?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

Yes, that is exactly what I am saying.

3.19.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Assistant Minister is probably not aware that last Wednesday when I met the 8 clients who are receiving therapeutic work through this scheme are very upset at the notice they have been given that their facility will close on 14th June and already we are seeing signs, because of anxiety, that their mental health is deteriorating. Is the Minister certain that suitable alternative activity is being provided? Because the clients concerned state that that is not the case and that is a new facility due to open in 18 months' time under Acorn Enterprises, which was to be, they thought, their destination. The Minister is closing down this facility with an 18-month gap when they will not be supported in therapeutic work.

Deputy E.J. Noel:

That is contrary to what I have been told. However, I would request that Deputy Southern comes into the department and discusses this with myself in our offices.