

5.10 Senator S.C. Ferguson of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the reorganisation of middle-grade doctors and surgeons:

As the C.S.R. growth allowed £1.2 million for reorganising the middle grade doctors and surgeons, what are the Minister's plans in this respect?

The Bailiff:

Assistant Minister, do I understand you are answering the question again?

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

Yes, Sir. The C.S.R. growth has been provided to bring the terms and conditions of middle grade doctors in line with that of the U.K. This is essential if the Island is to overcome current challenges associated with the recruitment and retention, the topic that has been spoken of before. Health and Social Services is currently negotiating an associate specialist contract with relevant staff groups. Once adopted, the contract will put us in a better place to attract middle grade doctors. As an interim measure, while negotiations are going on, with effect from 1st August 2010 Health and Social Services Department has awarded an annual stage payment of £5,000 interim award to all middle grades.

5.10.1 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Does the plan include measures to address disparities in terms, conditions and working hours of middle grade doctors in different hospital departments?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

Officers from our department are currently engaged with the local negotiations committee to discuss a range of issues. It is not appropriate to provide detailed information at this stage other than to say that it is a complex contract, which cuts across a number of areas including on-call, respective cover and uplift arrangements. Members will not be surprised to hear that changes to contractual arrangements is a contentious process with a variety of views from a variety of individuals and these need to be considered in the whole.

Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Is the Minister ...?

The Bailiff:

I am sorry, Senator, I beg your pardon. I will come back to you at the end but I had seen Deputy Jeune first of all and then Deputy Southern.

[12:30]

5.10.2 Deputy A.E. Jeune:

I would just like the Assistant Minister if he could to clarify, did he say in his answer that there has been a £5,000 annual award offered to middle grade staff, is that correct, and is this going to be £5,000 additional every year?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

It is correct that Health and Social Services has awarded an interim stage payment award of £5,000 per annum to middle grade doctors in lieu of the contract being settled. This payment came into effect from 1st August 2010 and was funded from

internal sources. However, for 2011 it will be coming from the growth C.S.R. bid. This amount will fall away once the new contractual terms have been agreed.

5.10.3 Deputy A.E. Jeune:

A supplementary, if I may. We have got something like 57 middle grade doctors, we have offered them all £5,000 extra per year, you are funding it from within your resources, why did you need Health Insurance Fund monies?

The Bailiff:

Why did the Minister need it?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

We managed to source it in 2010 because it only came into effect from 1st August from existing funds. Going forward we have not got those funds available for a full year and the payment is coming out in the interim from the £1.2 million growth bid.

5.10.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

I am somewhat confused because I heard earlier from the Assistant Minister that said the European Working Time Directive was not going to be applied to middle grade doctors, and I have just heard him say today that comparable U.K. conditions will be applied to middle grade doctors. Surely in the U.K. they work to the European Working Time Directive?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

As far as I am aware that is the case for trainee doctors, not middle grade doctors. Our trainee doctors, as I mentioned earlier, come under the Wessex Deanery and we have to comply with their regulations because they are employed by the Deanery and we pay the Deanery not the doctors direct. We have got to the other element of Deputy Southern's question, the interim payment is there to keep us competitive, so we can try and fill those 9 vacant posts of which we have filled 5 out of the 9.

5.10.5 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

The Assistant Minister has skimmed over the terms and conditions and working hours. Is he aware that some middle grade doctors work in excess of 90 hours a week, and can he really believe this does not have an effect on patient safety?

Deputy E.J. Noel:

As I mentioned before, I do not have the average figure for doctors working hours, and I have given an undertaking to find out those figures and to bring those figures to this House.