

2.12 Deputy M. Tadier of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the recruitment of 210 additional staff required to deliver Phase 1 of the planned White Paper initiative:

Will the Minister state what concrete plans, if any, there are to ensure that it will be possible to recruit the 210 additional staff required to deliver phase one of the planned White Paper initiative, given that some 100 frontline posts remain unfilled as indicated in the written answer to question 6993 on 10th July 2012?

Deputy A.E. Pryke of Trinity (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

This Assembly is already aware of the plans in place to tackle the challenges relating to the recruitment and retention of nurses. This is a key area both with regard to our existing vacancy rate and any future growth. With regard to the other posts outlined in my answer to question 6993, it was clearly stated that the number and nature of these posts will inevitably change pending a States debate on the White Paper and the medium-term financial plan, in addition to completion of the final business cases. Until we know the final details we cannot finalise our recruitment strategy. It would be unwise to do so. At this stage, too, it would be very wrong to assume that all these additional posts would be States employees or, where they were States employees, external recruitment is required. Some of our existing staff would doubtless take on some of these new roles.

2.12.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

I thank the Minister for that initial response. Will she talk about how the current pay negotiations are affecting morale at the hospital? Staff have talked of a derisory pay-off that is being made. Will that affect positively or negatively the retention and recruitment of additional staff in the Minister's opinion?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Pay is only one factor when you are looking at recruitment and retention. What is most important is that my nurses are treated and rewarded fairly for their skills and the work that they do. That is why Health is working in partnership with the unions to review equal pay for work on equal value. An interim report is going to be presented to the States Employment Board next week in line with the original terms of reference.

2.12.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Minister states that pay is not the only thing, but the figures show that she is something like 80 nurses short, 11 registered childcare officers short and 6 doctors short. Pay must surely be a vital element in recruitment and retention of those positions. For example, just picking one area, the rapid-response team requires a social worker, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, occupational therapists' assistants, nurses and homecare assistants. How is she going to recruit and retain the level of skills required in order to deliver her White Paper? Is it not the case that, without a substantial pay rise, she will fail?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I hope the Deputy has not made up his mind already about the White Paper. As I have said many times, pay is only one issue. Childcare comes into it. The cost of accommodation comes into it. Relocation costs come into it and also employment of nurses' or other posts' partners and spouses. They, too, are real issues which we are working to address. He mentions about the rapid response. As I mentioned in my opening comments, these staff might not be employed by Health and Social Services. They might be employed by other external agencies such as Family Nursing Services.

2.12.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is it built into her plan that she will substantially expand the role of third-sector delivery of these services and, in particular, is she considering using full-profit organisations to supply some of this demand?

The Deputy of Trinity:

We consider and will continue working with the third sector, be it the charitable sector, the voluntary organisation or in the private sector. That is happening now and we are consulting very closely with them. This White Paper very much concerns them because it concerns the community.

The Bailiff:

Senator, I believe we may be inquorate.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Can we call some more people to come back? I know there are some individuals who need to get out for the call of nature.

2.12.4 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Can the Minister explain what training or secondment programmes have been put in place so that we are able to grow our own to fill these vacancies and upcoming vacancies?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Part of grow-your-own involves linking with a university to make sure we have the right qualifications and that our education system is in the right place to grow our own. That is only one area. Another area is doing a back-to-nursing course, which has proved very successful.

2.12.5 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I wonder if the Minister can inform the Assembly whether secondments have been considered as a vital part of this ongoing programme?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Secondment with other health areas, yes; we are always looking at ways of getting best practice. If that means working with other health authorities or primary care trusts, yes, we do that. I think there is a programme that starts fairly soon within the Mental Health Services of working with S.E.P.T. (South Essex Partnership University N.H.S. (National Health Service) Foundation Trust) P.C.T. (Primary Care Trust), which is in Essex.

2.12.6 Deputy M. Tadier:

Obviously I appreciate the work that is going on by the Minister in trying to tackle this issue, but does she accept that, while she says pay is only one factor, pay is vital when it comes to paying the rent and to buying food and will she also try to tackle the high cost of living in Jersey? Is that within her control, if she does not want to increase the wages by what they should be, the shortfall, and the high cost of accommodation in Jersey, which is a big issue among many? Does she have a plan to tackle those issues if the 20 or 25 per cent gap that is needed for parity cannot be met?

The Deputy of Trinity:

These are areas for all the States departments to work at, not just Health and Social Services. We have not got the answer to everything. I value, as I said, that my nurses are treated fairly and rewarded for their skills. That is important. The ongoing discussions with the States Employment Board prove that and those discussions will be taking place fairly shortly.