

4.16 The Deputy of St. Peter of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding budget cuts to the respite services based at Oakwell:

Would the Minister inform Members whether respite services based at Oakwell are the subject of budget cuts?

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

I thank the Deputy for her question and I am happy to confirm that Oakwell respite services are not subject to budget cuts.

[11:30]

4.16.1 The Deputy of St. Peter:

Could the Assistant Minister then inform us why some people are expecting a cut to the hours of respite offered to their children.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

I have checked this. In fact the facilities at Oakwell should be increased at the moment because over the last couple of years the Deputy, and the Deputy of St. Brelade behind me, will know that what was initially respite service had become a residential service, but that has now been solved and the respite services are exactly back to where they were a year ago and not subject to budget cuts. If the Deputy has been speaking to people who have told her that they have had their individual packets cut, that is not what I have been told and I would like to hear more.

4.16.2 The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Will the Assistant Minister advise this Assembly whether there will be any budget cuts to general respite services provided for all age groups?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

I will not categorically say that there will be no respite cuts to all age groups because I have not been briefed on that question. What I would say is that in the White Paper - and the Deputies on the panel produced an excellent report on our respite services - there are new monies. There are new ways to produce respite with sitters. It does happen with older respite now and will be introduced into children's services.

4.16.3 The Deputy of St. Ouen:

As the Assistant Minister and this Assembly well know, reports have been out for nearly 12 months now regarding respite services and necessary improvements. I would ask the Assistant Minister, what plans are in place to improve access to the appropriate services for those in need?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

We have responded to the Scrutiny report and we have taken on board the majority of their recommendations, which will improve planned access to everybody in the system going through from children to adults. The *Action for Children* report really just emphasises what their own Scrutiny report asked us to do over a year ago.

4.16.4 The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Words are great but actions are far more important. Would the Assistant Minister confirm exactly when the current users will see improvements?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

There are some monies this year and they are due to come into force this year, as I am sure the Deputy well knows.

4.16.5 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

I have been in email contact in recent days with somebody who tells me their respite has been cut for their child and the question I wanted to ask the Assistant Minister is: has the fact that an individual who was living at Oakwell and is now being accommodated with 24/7 care in another location impacted on the amount of resource that is now available at Oakwell to care for children who go in for occasional respite?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

No. It was an individual packet and I will not discuss it any further, but that has not impacted. In fact that is what I said in an earlier answer. We have now solved that problem and Oakwell is fully functional as a full-time respite service. There is nobody staying there at the moment on a residential basis. I tried to phone the manager this morning and yesterday afternoon and I could not get in touch, because I wondered where this question is coming from. Obviously Deputy Hilton and the Deputy of St. Peter may have more information than me on individual cases and I can only hope that they pass that across.

4.16.6 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

I am disappointed to hear that the Assistant Minister could not get clarification from the manager either yesterday afternoon or this morning because quite obviously, to me, there is a problem and I do not believe that this information has been imparted to the Assistant Minister. Can the Assistant Minister go back to the manager and question that a little bit further? I will pass on the detail that I have got.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Yes, of course I will. We get given these questions and we receive the answers from the officers, but I always try - as I say, it was late yesterday and early this morning - to speak to the manager. Unfortunately I have not been able to do that. I will do that. I often visit Oakwell and the manager is also manager of another respite service. So if there are any individual problems I need to hear about them and I look forward to speaking to the Deputy after.

4.16.7 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

The Assistant Minister stated that, rather than there being a cutback, there was indeed an expansion. Could she give us precise figures as to what the expansion is?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

The budget for Oakwell last year was just under £500,000. This year it is just over £500,000, but there are new monies for respite and new ways of doing the respite services, as I mentioned, with sitters and going into people's homes instead of people going into respite. But it is also taking the client, the people, and the parents with you, because people are used to receiving the respite in one certain way and we need to do it slowly and in consultation with everybody.

4.16.8 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Is there any way that the Assistant Minister can give those figures, e.g. *exempli gratia* numbers expected to be supported in the community and numbers remaining in residence at Oakwell?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

As I say, I have just given the ballpark figure of around £500,000 to just over £500,000. That is for Oakwell alone. If we keep that same budget but do it slightly different with people going out into the community, more people will be served with probably more hours. But, as I say - and not everybody wants this - you need to take the families with you.

4.16.9 The Deputy of St. Peter:

Could the Assistant Minister confirm that capital projects agreed under the Medium-Term Financial Plan will also carry on this year?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Sorry to the Deputy. Oakwell is one of the top priorities to have a refurb, but we need to look into where the people will go at the time and with the least possible disruption of the services we provide there.