

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY DEPUTY M.R. HIGGINS OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 4th FEBRUARY 2014**

Question

- a) Will the Minister confirm that one of the children involved in Operation Vessel, the sex grooming case was in care at the time?
- b) Why did the Department not lodge a criminal complaint with the police as they were in loco parentis and had lawful authority to do so?
- c) What is the Department's policy in these circumstances?

Answer

- a) I am sure Members would agree it would be wholly inappropriate to discuss publicly the specific details of any investigation which may lead to the identification of one or more individuals.

However, I can confirm that there was a multi-agency investigation, which involved among others, States of Jersey Police and the Children's Service. The focus of the inquiry was on both investigating what, if any, crimes had been committed and to offer help and support to any young people who may be identified as being involved.

It is important to clarify that there was no correlation between this inquiry in Jersey and the circumstances of cases being investigated within the UK.

- b) The Children's Service was part of the initial inquiry, working alongside the States of Jersey Police as a critical partner in the multi-agency investigation. As such, the department was acting in the best interests of the children in its care
- c) The policy of the department is to protect the safety of all children, of all ages, whatever the circumstances and it goes without saying that we would take all appropriate, permissible action in any case where issues – criminal or otherwise – may indicate that a child in its care is in a vulnerable situation.

I would add that there has also been significant investment across all relevant agencies to raise awareness of childhood sexual exploitation and to increase support for any children, families and those professionals working with young people who may face such issues.