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3.8 Deputy R.J. Rondel of St. Helier of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the employment of full-time consultants:

Does the Minister consider that full-time consultants are preferable to using locums and if so, does he believe we are employing enough consultants to fulfil their roles and if not, why not?

Senator A.K.F. Green (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

I am delighted to be able to answer a question from Deputy Rondel. It is good to see him back here today. [Approbation] It is always preferable to have a substantive appointment in a funded consultant post. Yes, I do believe that we are employing enough consultants but this does continue to be regularly reviewed so the number of consultants is dynamic. I would remind Members that locum consultants offer a vital service to assist with leave cover on occasions with additional activity. In many specialities here in Jersey we do not have sufficient numbers to warrant additional substantive posts just to cover annual leave.

3.8.1 Deputy R.J. Rondel:

Does the Minister have a policy for succession planning when one consultant may retire or leave for other reasons?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

My department has a plan for succession planning, yes.

3.8.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Can the Minister give the following information to Members about the number of consultants in place and the numbers of locums and their periods of engagement over the past 5 years?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

The Deputy knows full well that that would take most of question time to do that. I do not have that detail with me. I am not sure that I would be able to provide that detail but I will have a look at it.

3.8.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Can the Minister state why he considers that he might not be able to provide such basic data to the House?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

I can provide the basic data for this year but to go back 5 years is, I might suggest, very time consuming, time wasting and not that productive.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Minister surely has ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

No, that was already a second supplementary, Deputy.

3.8.4 Deputy A.D. Lewis:

There is a worldwide huge demand for medical professionals at the moment. Sorry, did you hear that, Minister? A huge demand for medical professionals at the moment pushing the price up. Is Jersey competitive enough at attracting the best consultants? Do we have a problem with that? In

which case is that one of the reasons why we are having to use locums? Is it difficult to attract consultants to Jersey with the current terms and conditions that the Health Department has?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

The Deputy makes a really interesting point and, to be honest, it does vary by speciality. Some specialities where there is plenty of appropriately skilled people available are easier to fill than others and we do struggle in the worldwide market sometimes to make a suitable appointment, but I would suggest it is not the financial package that is the problem. It is the worldwide shortage. We are out to advertise at the moment for a consultant in dermatology and we are happy now to target South Africa, Australia, New Zealand because previous applicants were not up to the level that we would have liked them to be up to. We all know that when you appoint in haste you relent in leisure.

3.8.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

Just a follow-on from Deputy Southern's question to give the Minister a second chance. Is it truly the case that the 5 years data that Deputy Southern is asking for cannot be obtained? It seems to me that if a F.O.I. (Freedom of Information) request were put in by a member of the public then there would be an obligation on the department to provide that information. Yet we find ourselves in a situation where the Minister is making excuses for a Member of this Assembly by refusing to give the information. Would the Minister reconsider that?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

It is not a case of reconsidering. However, I will make it clear. If it is easily available and it is not going to take hours and hours of work to provide the 5 years' information then I am happy to do so. What I am not prepared to do is to tie-up an officer for hours and hours when we have got more productive things to do.

3.8.6 Deputy M. Tadier:

If it does take hours and hours to get this kind of information or any other information that Members or the public might want does that not say more about the state of recordkeeping in his department rather than the reasonable requests which are coming forward from Back-Benchers?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

The Member makes a very good case for getting on with eGovernment.

3.8.7 Senator Z.A. Cameron:

Considering the emphasis of the Verita Report on the importance of employing full-time consultants rather than locums and that explored the circumstances around the death of a nurse and cost the Island a considerable amount of money, does the Minister not consider it important to monitor the ongoing use of locums for our economy as well as patient safety?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Absolutely. Locums have a place in all hospitals in supporting other full-time consultant posts who need to go on annual leave or C.P.D. (Continuing Professional Development). We are not big enough to have a floating pool of people standing by just in case. That is where the use of locums come in. We much prefer the use though of substantive posts where it is possible to do so and we are always reviewing the current situation with regard to consultants. I can say that we have appointed, or are about to appoint, further consultants in trauma and orthopaedics, a fourth consultant paediatrician and an interface position working between the emergency assessment and the community as a

whole. This thing is dynamic. It is always under review. But Jersey cannot have everything given the small number of some of the specialities that we have to cater for.

3.8.8 Senator Z.A. Cameron:

My question was that we should be monitoring the use of locums and that the Minister should be able to provide those details over the last 5 years considering the Verita Report was done before that.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I am sorry, Senator Cameron, this is an opportunity to ask a question, not to make a statement so what is your question for the Minister?

Senator Z.A. Cameron:

My question is: does he not think it is important that he does monitor and provide the States with that data for the last 5 years?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

It is important that we monitor the qualification, suitability and the use of locums and that they continually have their correct C.P.D., *et cetera*. Of course we must do that. It is just a practical view that we may not have the records going back 5 years. I have been the Minister for a year. I do not know. If we have those facilities and that information is easily available I will make it available.

3.8.9 Deputy R.J. Rondel:

I am not convinced that there is not an issue on this subject and the Minister will be aware I have put in a written question along the lines that Deputy Southern has asked orally and I will be discussing it with the Minister and will re-present it, hopefully, for the next sitting. That will enable him to have more time to answer the question fully.

The Deputy Bailiff:

We now come to question 9 that Deputy Martin ... I beg your pardon, I should have at least given you a chance to answer that. I apologise.

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Sorry, I was not sure that there was a question there but however [Interruption] ... well, there is a question there, am I happy to provide? I am happy to be as open and as honest with Members as I can be practically with the information that is available. I am going to meet with the Deputy to discuss what it is he needs to know, what would help him, so that we can spend time getting that information and not time getting information that we think he might need that is not appropriate.