

5.11 Deputy R. Labey of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the impact on hospital services of reduced funding for Family Nursing and Home care:

Is it current policy to invest in community health services in order to relieve pressure on the General Hospital and, if so, how does the decision to reduce funding for Family Nursing and Home Care fit within that policy, will that reduction generate so called “bed blockers” at the hospital which can hamper clinical operations and, if so, will the Minister reconsider his decision?

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

I would just like to start before I answer the question in detail by telling off my dear friend, Deputy Labey of St. Helier, because we do not refer to patients as “bed blockers”, they are people’s family members, mothers, fathers. They are not bed blockers, they are patients, but I will answer the question now. H.S.S.D. (Health and Social Services Department) is reducing the subsidy it provides to Family Nursing and Home Care. I think I have explained that fully, not only today, but particularly today. There are 21 other providers of home care that are available for people wishing to use them. Family Nursing, by their own admission, and I do not like doing this because I have a lot of respect for Family Nursing; I spoke last night at length with the Chief Executive, but Family Nursing, by their own admission, anticipate providing 30 per cent less home care this year, so they are already making a change. Patients discharged from hospital could be delayed if they cannot yet cope living at home and would be eligible for the Rapid Response and Reablement system which I think is one of our great successes. But to pick up on the investment, we have invested £35 million in community services through P.82 in the 4-year programme. This includes an additional £2.6 million in Family Nursing since 2014 of which £1.8 million was the Rapid Response and Reablement. We have further funding of £731,000 to support community provision.

5.11.1 Deputy R. Labey:

Aside from the Minister’s conversation last night with the Chief Executive, I wonder if any direct discussions with Family Nursing were undertaken by the Minister with them prior to last night’s discussion. The department has said that they want more detailed information over the weekend, does that indicate a poor decision basis?

Senator A.K.F. Green:

Absolutely not. Two years of discussions, several meetings with the Chief Executive and the Finance Director, including myself and officers, one meeting with the whole board, let us be clear, the Chief Executive and the Finance Director signed the contract; they were not made to sign it. They came in in August and signed the contract. As far as I was concerned, the box was ticked, we were on our way until the last meeting when we were doing the Medium Term Financial Plan. I do not intend to review my decision. It was a negotiated settlement agreed with Family Nursing but I will support my officers in ensuring that those who have difficulty funding their care following an increase in rate, if eligible, will be supported through the Long-term care scheme.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Would you like a final and further supplementary? Very well.