

2018.10.09

3 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the decision not to fund a lead midwife with responsibility for breastfeeding: [OQ.136/2018]

What was the process behind the decision not to fund a lead midwife with responsibility for breastfeeding and how does this fit in with the commitment of the new Council of Ministers to put children first?

The Deputy of St. Ouen (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

Promotion in support of breastfeeding is a key remit of every midwife and every other healthcare professional that comes into contact with new mothers and infants. It need not be seen as the role of one individual. We currently have a breastfeeding champion who, as part of her role as a community midwife, advises other midwives and individual mothers on breastfeeding. We would like to expand this role further as standards for the U.N.I.C.E.F. (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) Baby Friendly Initiative are worked through, and therefore a bid for funding was sought for this. At present, no final decision has been taken. There is in progress a priority setting process, which has not yet been completed. As you can imagine, the Health and Community Services Department has many demands on funding of which this is just one of them.

3.3.1 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I thank the Minister for his support with this and with the Baby Friendly Initiative. Does he agree that increasing breastfeeding rates, as per the food and nutrition strategy, and for example as well the new Council of Ministers' well-being priority, it is extremely important that we should get it right. That having a lead midwife in the first 3 to 5 days, when a mother is in hospital or being visited at home by the midwife, is very important. The lead that we have at the moment is the health visitor that kicks-in after the fifth day. Would the Minister agree, when he is going through the prioritisation process, will he try to put the funding in for this lead midwife, if possible?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I think we need to consider whether having a dedicated midwife - one only - is a prerequisite and is necessary to support the delivery of the U.N.I.C.E.F. initiative. Perhaps far better if the whole initiative was supported by all midwives and all other healthcare professionals so that that support for breastfeeding was given at an early stage. But as I have said, the process is still under review, and I welcome the Deputy's involvement. Just at the moment, we cannot give a final yes or no as to the question asked.

3.3.2 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:

Does the Minister believe that breastfeeding mothers are fully aware of the facility now offered at the Town Hall on the ground floor, with a comfortable family room set aside for their use? Would he agree to help the Parish in getting that message out more effectively?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

In answer to the Connétable: perhaps not all expectant mothers are aware of that. I will do what I can to assist the Parish in that worthy initiative by the Parish of St. Helier?

3.3.3 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I thank the Minister for his support. The evidence does show that having a champion or a lead in the area, as well as having some training across the workforce, having a champion is really important for

increasing breastfeeding rates. Would the Minister please update the B.F.I. (Baby Friendly Initiative) steering group on the progress of this funding bid and the prioritisation that is taking place please?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes, I commit we will update the group as and when the process continues and completes.