

2019.04.30

17 Deputy K.G. Pamplin of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the measures taken to protect people from attempting to take their own life in possible danger spots: (OQ.113/2019)

Will the Minister advise what measures, if any, are taken within his portfolio to protect vulnerable people from attempting to take their own life in possible danger spots, such as multi-storey car parks and, in particular, whether any specific policies, or procedures, have been put in place on this matter?

Deputy K.C. Lewis (The Minister for Infrastructure):

I was most sorry to hear of the recent casualty. Fencing was installed in the multi-storey car parks a number of years ago and this has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of suicides and attempted suicides from these. There have been a small number of incidents since this was installed, possibly 2 or 3 and, on each occasion, advice received from the States of Jersey Police was acted upon. Following the most recent incident, a further review of all the multi-storey car parks is being undertaken, to determine if any further improvements to this fencing is required. We have also been approached regarding signage from Samaritans, which is being discussed.

4.17.1 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I thank the Minister for his answer. The figures that he alludes to there I have also seen and, speaking to mental health staff and others, there are growing concerns. Given what he has just taken here, will he agree to publishing what measures are being put in place and then agreeing to meet with the people concerned, talking about these concerns, myself included, at the various locations to see the changes in place?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

The Deputy will recall we paid a visit to Orchard House recently and had long talks with members of staff there. The work is ongoing and the Deputy is welcome to walk around the multi-storey car parks with me and see exactly what is being done. As I say, we did have signage there some time ago, I am quite happy to say that will be replaced with the telephone number of Samaritans, which, I am sure the Deputy will agree, do an absolutely first-class job. Unfortunately, there is little we can do, from a departmental point of view, if people wish to end their lives by using the natural environment, shall we say. But, we do work closely with colleagues; in the multi-storey car parks we do have closed circuit television, which is monitored throughout all the working hours. Staff have notified the police in the past and people attempting to do something have, in fact, been talked down by a police expert. As I say, we are taking advice from the police, in which case we will act upon that and improve signage.

4.17.2 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I just note, the visit to Orchard House the Minister referred to was one of my requests and I was very grateful that he, the Minister for Health and Social Services and the Chief Minister came to that. But not just me, because it was not about me, it was about the failing standards of a building that is not fit for purpose in 2019. You have heard from the staff, you saw for yourself. The fact is, we are talking about a very delicate situation here, of course; you mentioned casualties, you mentioned people attempting in a natural environment. I am thinking of the human aspects of what happened only 2 weeks ago and the impact it has on not just the individual, the Islanders who witnessed it, the staff, the hospital people that I spent time with and one person is one person too many. I agree with

you that change had been made, but people are looking for more than that, they are looking for reassurances and I thank the Minister for his comments.

The Bailiff:

I do not think that is a question.