

2019.06.18

**7 Deputy M.R. Higgins of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding the actions taken by the States of Jersey Police to encourage the victims of sexual abuse to come forward: (OQ.166/2019)**

Will the Minister explain to Members what actions, if any, the States of Jersey Police are taking to encourage the victims of sexual abuse to come forward and place their trust in the police? Will he provide his assessment of how effective any such measures have been in ensuring the public are convinced that the police investigate all allegations without fear or favour?

**The Connétable of St. Clement (The Minister for Home Affairs):**

We support victims of sexual assault through Dewberry House, that excellent facility that houses the Sexual Assault Referral Centre, known as S.A.R.C. for short. The police undertake a number of precaution actions to encourage victims to come forward, including awareness raising campaigns. I think we all noticed the rape campaign a few months ago, which was linked to the new Sexual Offences (Jersey) Law. Currently, we have the Pantosaurus campaign being run jointly with the Safeguarding Partnership Board and the N.S.P.C.C. (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children). We also have an annual campaign, linked to the National Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness Day. During the past 5 years, the police have seen a 62.5 per cent increase in reported sexual offences, up from 112 in 2014 to 182 in 2018. That does not mean that there has been a significant increase in that type of offence, because it is the type of offence that remains unreported. The increase should be welcomed, because I believe it demonstrates that the public and victims, in particular, have increasing confidence in the police to investigate these allegations fairly, impartially and robustly.

**3.7.1 Deputy M.R. Higgins:**

While I commend the work that has taken place, all that good work is now being unravelled in the sense that there are allegations on U.K. (United Kingdom) media of a reasonably prominent person, who has been accused of grooming young children and that the police have failed to do their duty and investigate properly and, indeed, that the person was known to the police and had a relationship with some of them. Will the Chief Minister ... sorry, will the Minister - I know you are not Chief Minister yet - order an independent investigation into these allegations, not including the Police Complaints Authority, which, unfortunately, is not very good at doing these things, or the Police Standards Department?

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

It is shocking, in my view, that Deputy Higgins should base these sort of allegations on some comments made on social media.

[10:30]

We all know that Deputy Higgins, when it comes to being a conspiracy theorist, is right up there at the very top. I invite him once again to get his facts from the people, who know what is going on, not on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat. Come and see me, I say to Deputy Higgins. Come and see the police officers responsible for dealing with sexual offences and get his facts right, before he makes these sort of wide allegations, which are offensive to the States of Jersey Police suggesting that they do not investigate things properly, because I know they do. If he would take up my invitation ... because I have made invitations to the Deputy before to come and see things that go on at the prison, for example, but so far he does not want to do that, because he might find out what is

going on. Come and find out what is going on in the truth and stop making these allegations in public before you know your facts. **[Approbation]**

### **3.7.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins:**

First of all, with regard to the prison, I am going to take up the invitation and take the Minister for Home Affairs to meet the police and ask the question. I will bring with me copies of the text messages that were posted, which *prima facie* show that an offence has been committed in trying to groom. I think for the Minister to attack me for raising these things is to forget that, in the past, evidence was given to the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry that police officers did not investigate sexual abuses and indeed certain officers covered up what had gone on. What I am trying to do, is prevent history repeating itself. I will take up the invitation.

#### **The Bailiff:**

That was not a question, though, Deputy.

### **Deputy M.R. Higgins:**

Does the Minister for Home Affairs agree that, in the past, the police have not always done their job and did cover up child abuse, as the evidence to the Care Inquiry revealed?

#### **The Connétable of St. Clement:**

I have absolutely no reason to think that, certainly not on my watch, nor in modern history. But I do not criticise and I will not criticise the Deputy for raising concerns. What I do criticise the Deputy for is for raising concerns in the wrong place and in the wrong manner.

### **3.7.3 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

My question on this matter is in regard to what policy is in place - if the Minister can define it for me now or send it to Members - when members of the police force, or anybody in that service, are criticised in the public in terms of social media, how that is dealt with and what the policy is in responding, just for help and clarification.

#### **The Connétable of St. Clement:**

That is very much an operational matter and I cannot go into the detail of how it is dealt with, because I do not know the detail of how it is dealt with. What I can tell you is that the States of Jersey Police have very strong welfare support and officers, who are accused of the sort of actions that have appeared on social media and require support, will have that made available to them.

### **3.7.4 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Does the Minister agree with me that the Deputy, who asked this question, is a longstanding Member of the Assembly, as is the Minister and that when it comes to putting children first and seeking to represent the survivors of child abuse, the questioner stands head and shoulders with anyone else in this Assembly in terms of that representation and that it is slightly beneath the Minister to suggest that the Deputy is a conspiracy theorist when all he is trying to do ... and he has heard lots of stories from individuals, I am sure, not just on Facebook and social media, but face to face and he sat through a committee of inquiry that has recommended that we all do our part to restore faith in all of our authorities in the Island. Would the Minister congratulate the Deputy in putting forward these questions and work constructively with him in future?

#### **The Connétable of St. Clement:**

I agree that the Deputy is a longstanding Member of this Assembly.

**3.7.5 Deputy M.R. Higgins:**

Does the Minister for Home Affairs feel that his answer is reassuring to all those who have suffered sexual abuse in the Island, that they are going to get a sympathetic hearing from Ministers and from the police?

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Absolutely. I think the figures speak for themselves. As I said in my answer, we are seeing more sexual assault crime being reported and we are seeing more sexual crime being dealt with in the courts. I think that shows an increasing confidence in the way the States Police deal with these issues and how the courts deal with these issues. The confidence in the Island, in these issues is being greatly appreciated, it is growing and improving. As I said before, I do not criticise the Deputy for raising these questions. I do criticise him for the manner in which they are being raised.