

2019.07.02

1 Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the services provided for deaf Islanders: (OQ.180/2019)

Following the answer to my Written Question 285/2019, will the Minister state what work has been done, or is being undertaken, to ensure sufficient services are provided to meet the needs of deaf Islanders?

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

My answer to the Deputy's Written Question 285/2019 details the services provided to deaf and hard of hearing Islanders in Health and Community Services, and in Children, Young People, Education and Skills, including services within schools. In addition, work has been undertaken alongside the voluntary organisations to better understand the communication and support needs of the deaf community in Jersey. It chose a need for Government to play a part in providing interpreting services, advice and advocacy, community support and specialist knowledge. The Directors General for both Health and Community Services and Children's Services continue to explore options of how best to meet these needs and there has been discussion with Earsay, the Jersey Deaf Society and the Deaf Partnership Board to ensure this process includes all voluntary sector bodies and all members of the deaf community. We are organising an information and engagement session so that all these ideas can be shared with the wider deaf community. That meeting will include communications support using British Sign Language interpreters and speech to text reporters. The plans that will be discussed at that meeting include the introduction of a dedicated worker with specialist knowledge who will provide advice, advocacy and support for the deaf community. In our Customer and Local Services Department there is also work going on, on a project, to implement a remote interpreting services for British Sign Language users across the whole Government of Jersey.

3.1.1 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I thank the Minister for his answer and his written answer, which I was trying to read very quickly. In 2018 there was one British Sign Language level 3 trained social worker however their employment ceased in April this year and currently there is no social worker with that high level of skill. What work is going on to replace that much needed role in social work?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I am not in a position to discuss an individual member of staff and the departure of any individuals.

[9:45]

But work is going on to create and recruit to a post of a deaf community liaison officer. That work is being carried out in conjunction with representatives from the voluntary organisations that support the deaf community in Jersey and it is currently undergoing external evaluation. Then recruitment to the post will commence. Meanwhile, British Sign Language is used by at least 2 staff within our services who have level 2 British Sign Language.

3.1.2 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. Lawrence:

In regard to the level 3 work of the social worker that Deputy Pamplin just mentioned, or with regard to the post rather than the individual, in a recent communication the Minister for Health and Social Services mentioned that there was no replacement, and I believe this has just been reiterated. Could the Minister for Health and Social Services please explain why a crucial post that created a

vital link between deaf people and society was got rid of without having a planned replacement or a plan to replace them?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

It is not the case, as might be inferred from the question, that we are reacting to a departure of a member of staff. There was a plan being developed throughout last year, indeed when I first came into office this work was being undertaken, as to how best to meet the needs of the community and, as I have said before, the post of a community liaison officer is being developed and that is in conjunction with the voluntary organisations that represent the community.

3.1.3 Deputy K.F. Morel:

The Minister for Health and Social Services mentions that this is being done to best meet the needs of the community. Families that have contacted me have told me quite simply they knew nothing about this. Could the Minister explain how he is meeting the best needs of the community without liaising or speaking with the deaf community?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

All I can say is that this work is - and I have said it before - being done in conjunction with the 2 charities who work in the area and those 2 charities come together as the Deaf Partnership Board, with Government, to plan these services. I have had meetings with members of the deaf community. I have had letters that I have responded to, emails also. I am willing to discuss the issue with all those who might not yet be aware of the current services and the current plan.

3.1.4 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I also return to an F.O.I. (freedom of information) on a similar subject that the Children's Service do not have any workers specifically providing support for D/deaf and hard of hearing children. I did not know if the Minister for Children and Housing was aware of this fact. With that in line, and everything he is saying, will he put this as an urgent matter on an already very busy agenda for the Minister?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I am reporting from the written answer that was provided to the Deputy, that there are 2 qualified teachers for the deaf and one audiologist working in Education. There are additional resource centres for hearing needs at St. Clement and Le Rocquier schools with team leaders and key workers. There is a children's complex needs team, which supports families with children who have permanent or substantial disabilities, which would include deaf or hard of hearing issues. I cannot speak for the Children's Department any longer but it would appear from the research undertaken to provide the written answer that there is a team and there are people in post supporting children.