

2019.07.16

16 The Connétable of St. Martin of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding mental health check-ups for Islanders aged under 18: (OQ.190/2019)

Will the Minister consider introducing an annual mental health check-up from a psychologist, psychiatrist, or mental health professional for Islanders aged under 18, in order to help maintain positive mental health and provide support for those in need, particularly if they are experiencing, or have experienced, trauma?

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

I will ask my Assistant Minister, Senator Mézec, to answer this question.

Senator S.Y. Mézec (Assistant Minister for Health and Social Services - *rapporteur*):

I thank the Constable for the question, which recognises the need to be preventative with all aspects of a child, or young person's, mental health. Early access and intervention is key and requires delivering support using the right people with the right skills and at the right time. Last week, when myself and the Minister discussed this question, the view was that, although this is a well-meaning proposal, it would not necessarily see resources directed in the best way, it would take up substantial resources and a better approach is to focus on those when they are in need and not necessarily just an annual check-up, which could come at a time that does not necessarily have any benefit to that person.

5.16.1 The Connétable of St. Martin:

This question has arisen from speaking to parents of young people, who would welcome an initiative such as this. I had said that it would take up maybe too many resources. It was just really to bring it into the public arena, because we all agree that prevention is better than cure and I just would like more to be gone into to safeguard our young people's mental health. I would ask the Assistant Minister if he agrees with this.

Senator S.Y. Mézec:

I entirely agree with the sentiment that the Constable has expressed and this is probably a good time to be having that discussion, because C.A.M.H.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) is currently undergoing a 12-month programme of review and redesign, which is looking at the spectrum of need. We know that Mental Health Services are strained and it is right that we focus attention where there is going to be maximum benefit and obviously preventative care has to be part of that. As I said, this particular proposal for a random annual mental health check-up would take up a lot of resources and not necessarily be directed at those when they are most in need. But it is absolutely right that we have an open discussion about what services can be targeted at the best time and talking to parents and particularly talking to young people is definitely useful, so if she wants to continue that discussion with us, I am sure that myself and the Minister would be happy to have that discussion.

The Bailiff:

That brings this part of question time to an end. He is not in the Chamber at the moment, but Deputy Morel asked me to rule on the Minister's answer under question 19. He was asking me to rule under Standing Order 63(7)(b), which is in these terms: 'Where the Presiding Officer is of the opinion that an answer given under this Standing Order is not directly relevant to the question asked, or a supplementary question, the Presiding Officer shall inform the Member, who is required

to give the answer of that opinion and request the Member to provide an answer that is directly relevant to the question, or supplementary question, that was originally asked.’ In this case, the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture was asked to list consulting firms and consultants and supplementary information in respect of those firms and consultants engaged between 1st January 2018 and 30th June 2019. In summary, his answer says that he will publish such information in a report in October this year, which Ministers generally are going to produce. A similar answer has been given by the Chief Minister to a similar question on behalf of the States Employment Board. I think it is impossible to say the answer is not relevant to the question, even if the answer does not provide the information the Deputy had sought and the answer is, therefore, in accordance with Standing Orders. I make the ruling at this stage, because it may be relevant to any questions that might come in the Chief Minister’s direction, in questions without notice, which we are now going to start. The first Minister up is the Minister for Social Security.