

2019.11.25

2 Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding patients occupying nursing beds in private sector care homes that were funded by the Minister's Department: (OQ.292/2019)

Will the Minister advise whether any patients, upon discharge from either the General Hospital, or a U.K. hospital, are occupying nursing beds in private sector care homes for recuperation that are funded by his Department?

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

Instances where Health and Community Services funds nursing beds in the private sector are very rare. It may occur when short-term care, or reablement, is required. For example, when it is not yet safe for an individual to return home, but not in their best interests to continue to stay in hospital. An example given to me was when a patient had a hip operation, but was not yet weight-bearing, but it was nevertheless better for that patient to be in a social care environment, rather than stay in the General Hospital. The question also asks about repatriation from a U.K. hospital and this is normally done by way of a scheduled flight and the patient going straight home, or by a chartered hospital to hospital transfer with discharge planning commencing upon return to the Island. In very exceptional circumstances, it can be safer for a patient to go straight to a social care arrangement and, in those instances, discharge planning around complex care has happened in the U.K. with departmental staff travelling to the relevant care centres in the U.K. to make those plans.

3.2.1 Deputy C.S. Alves:

How are the numbers of these occurrences recorded and are they available in the public domain?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

No, I do not believe they are routinely published, or available in the public domain, because those instances are rare, I am told.

3.2.2 Deputy K.F. Morel:

If I could ask the Minister to refer back to the original question, which was: will the Minister advise whether any patients are occupying? So, it is very much a question about the current situation. I was wondering if the Minister would answer by letting the Assembly know whether today any patients are occupying nursing beds in private sector care homes, as the first question?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Drilling down into the question like that, I have to advise that I am not aware whether today there are any such patients.

[15:00]

I regret, but I will ask and I will inform the Assembly.

3.2.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

While sounding like an answer, 'rare' is not a number. Can the Minister indicate how many such beds have been needed in the last, say, 5 years?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

That depends on how the records are kept. Five years is a long time. May I limit that to a reasonable number, in case it means a member of staff having to trawl through records for days on end. I just do not know. I will say that we will provide the numbers over the last 12 months; if it is any easier we will go further than that.

3.2.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

How can the Minister say that the cases are rare, if he does not have the numbers to back that up?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

This is a point of detail concerning the running of the hospital and discharge arrangements. I am not privy to every patient who is going through the hospital and exactly how they are discharged. I have said they are rare, because that was the advice given to me.

3.2.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

Would the Minister explain why his officers have not provided him with any figures to back up this question, given that this is the most obvious supplementary question to come out of oral questions and that, surely, they risk making the Minister look slightly foolish not having that information to hand?

The Bailiff:

Are you able to assist on the information you have been given, Minister?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I can only repeat what I have said. As Members might know, we meet together to discuss questions. We obviously took a line anticipating what information was required and I would hope that Members would see it is about how we take decisions based on people's best interests, not just about numbers. This is about care and this is about looking after people in the best way possible. That is how we approached it. We obviously did not foresee that some Members would want to drill down into the actual numbers of a very rare occurrence, but that request has been made and I will do my best to provide that information.

3.2.6 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Would the Minister agree, given that we are currently developing a future healthcare model, which I would say looks very promising, that this is exactly the sort of data that is essential to feed into that model, so that we can plan for the future and ensure that we are providing the best care in the best place and at the best time?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I would agree and I am sure it will be fed into the model.

3.2.7 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

On this chain of thought, as we discovered in our Scrutiny hearing recently, the information provided on the website for the outpatients is inaccurate, has not been updated since September, so again, continuing that theme, when can the Minister start providing us with the accurate information; that we cannot see questions like this coming through when there is genuine concern?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes, in the Scrutiny Panel meeting we explained the limitations on the data collection we have at the moment and we felt that those figures, as the Deputy has said, were not accurate, but they were, unfortunately, the best figures we had at the time. But so much more work is being done around data collection, which I am sure will include recording the figures that Deputy Alves has asked about. That release of information will be improved very shortly.

The Bailiff:

Final supplementary, Deputy Alves?

Deputy C.S. Alves

No, thank you, Sir.