

2020.02.25

11 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of the Minister for Social Security regarding the Disability Strategy Annual Progress Report: (OQ.53/2020)

What progress has been made towards publishing the next Disability Strategy Annual Progress Report?

Deputy J.M. Maçon (Assistant Minister for Social Security - *rapporteur*):

On behalf of the Minister, I can confirm that she intends to publish a progress report in May 2020. The Minister for Social Security took responsibility for the disability strategy exactly a year ago, in February 2019. The disability strategy was first published by the previous Council of Ministers in 2017. Until the end of 2019, the focus has been on progressing the designated short-term actions.

3.11.1 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I thank the Assistant Minister for his answer. Looking at the 2018 update, it is stated that the next annual progress report will be published in autumn 2019. Can the Minister give the reasons for the delay, please and also give some outline on what has been progressed, given that there is not an update available online?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Yes, I think it is down to just the changing of portfolios and responsibility. Absolutely accept the criticism that we have let this one slip. The Minister has put it on our radar and the progress report is due to be out in May. A lot of the work that has been done so far, because there was not a budget attached to it, has been in-house training. A lot of it has been the drafting of guidelines and things like that. However, under the Government Plan, money was attached to this and over the next 4 years there will be £2 million spend to the disability strategy. I accept the criticism that there has been a slight delay, but there will be that progress report due to be made.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

The second part of my question, I am not sure was answered. Can the Minister [sic] give any specific details on any of progress points that were within the 2018 update and have any of those been further progressed?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Yes, they will be in the next report. However, I would imagine the Deputy will not be satisfied with that and, therefore, the notes that I have provided I will forward them to the Deputy and other Members if they are interested in them from the information that officers have provided us with.

3.11.2 Senator K.L. Moore:

What additional guidance will be offered in the strategy for those with neuro-diverse issues, particularly for employers, giving guidance as to how they can make reasonable adjustments to the workplace, to meet the needs of people who have neuro-diversity?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I thank the Senator for her question. Being someone who is dyslexic and dyspraxic, I am familiar with these issues around neuro-diversity. I cannot advise the Senator exactly what is going into that report yet, but I can give the undertaking that I will ensure that officers do look at this to make reference in the report.

3.11.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

May I ask the Assistant Minister his view on how successful the current disability strategy has been and what impact it has had for those who will benefit from it?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Of the work that has been done, the training that has been given in-house, the restructuring of forms and processes, that has been helpful. There is far more work to be done and that has certainly been acknowledged by the Government in the Government Plan, by putting forward in the next 4 years £2 million. There is much more work to be done. That is acknowledged. What has been done from a no budget place, I certainly would not want to knock the officers, as they are doing hard work behind the scenes in improving our processes and functions and giving training to officers.

3.11.4 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Given the welcome recognition that not all disabilities can be seen, does the Assistant Minister believe that £2 million is enough to deal with the issues that we face as a society, to be genuinely inclusive, of all members of our society?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I am absolutely certain that it is going to be an uphill struggle, this strategy will be a living document and that more money may be required over the time. However, what is a good thing is that this Government has decided to start grasping the nettle and has put some money where its mouth is.

3.11.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

Apart from in standard written form on paper and on the internet, what other formats is the disability strategy available in?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I am unable to advise the Deputy at this time. I will look into it and get back to him.

3.11.6 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I thank the Assistant Minister for his answers. Does the Assistant Minister think that disability, in terms of equality and diversity priorities, do you think that this area is being given enough priority and that there is more we could do in terms of championing those issues?

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Do I think more could be done? More can always be done. It is one of those types of questions that you can say those types of things to. What is more important is that this strategy now has money behind it and therefore we are able to start producing some tangible results for those members of our community that need greater support and need greater inclusion. Absolutely accept the premise of the Deputy's question, but I would say that this Government is starting to make a natural tack towards this by actually putting some money behind it.