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14 Deputy I. Gardiner of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the steps available to Islanders who had suffered as a result of dental malpractice: (OQ.69/2020)

Will the Minister advise what steps are available for Islanders who believe their health has suffered as a result of dental malpractice and who wish the level of care they have received to be investigated and regulated?

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

Dentists are regulated by the General Dental Council in the same way that doctors are regulated by the General Medical Council. Both those bodies are responsible for upholding professional standards. Any person can refer a dentist to the General Dental Council. Any concerns, or complaints, about the conduct, or practice, of any dental professional should be brought to their attention. If a dentist is employed in Health and Community Services there is, in addition, the Departmental complaints process available. I would also expect each private dental practice to have a complaints procedure available to its clients, which should be followed initially, of course. In addition, some dentists in the Island, but not all, are members of the Jersey Dental Association. Looking at its website, it is clear that it is prepared to act as a mediator in disputes, but it does not hold any remit to regulate dentists.

3.14.1 Deputy I. Gardiner:

I would just like to double check, if I understood it correctly, that we do not have a body in Jersey who oversees private dental practice and if somebody would like to submit the complaint we cannot know how many complaints on dental services on the Island were submitted?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

The Deputy is broadly correct. We have oversight over the registration of dentists in the Island, because any dentist wishing to come to the Island to practice needs to present evidence of their registration by the Jersey Dental Council to the Royal Court and they are registered then on the local register. Any complaint that is made to the General Dental Council will be examined and the outcome of that complaint, if there is a detrimental outcome to the dentist, will be published on the General Dental Council website. So, the Council can issue a reprimand, it can place conditions on registration, it can suspend a dentist for a period of time, or it can strike them off the register entirely, so that would be apparent to Islanders from looking at the website. But it is true we have no local regulation, apart from the initial registration around dentists.

3.14.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Does the Minister think it is desirable that there should be further regulation, or rather, regulation of the dental industry and a mechanism for recording complaints, which have been lodged against dentists?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I would like to involve the dental profession to a greater degree in provision for Islanders. We are in discussions with them around taking on some of the work around children's checks and doing some perhaps low-level dental work. Those discussions have started and I hope that the dentists, and the signs are that some are responding well and will seek to involve themselves with that programme of work. With it I foresee that we would need - and I have no reason to believe the dentists would not

agree - we would need some sort of service level agreement, or some way of ensuring that we get proper and reliable outcomes from the dentists.

4.14.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Presumably the establishment of regulation for the dental industry and a mechanism to record complaints about the industry should not be dependent on the Minister for Health and Social Services working closely on a separate policy area with some dentists. Does he either agree, or disagree, that regulation is *de facto* a good thing and will he pursue it?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes, as a matter of principle I would agree with the Deputy that it is a good thing. We do not have, in the Island, that means of ensuring the quality control, let us say, that other medical practices, for example doctors, have agreed to and this Assembly has enforced. We are in discussions with the dental profession around all this.

3.14.4 Deputy I. Gardiner:

Would the Minister look into how local dental services can be monitored, to ensure that Islanders receive up to date practices equal to services offered in other countries? Also, how we can protect our Islanders, because this question was prompted by a parishioner who retired and spent in excess of £15,000 and is still not right. I have heard more than one story around this and retired people cannot go outside and complain and try to find how they can be supported. So, would the Minister again think how we can monitor and support Islanders on the Island?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I am certainly prepared to consider and try to pursue that. I do not think that it would be a function within my Department because, of course, my Department employs some dentists and my Department is also a regulated body. So, it is probably the Care Commission that would take up such a role, but it is not within the remit of the Care Commission at the present time. Interestingly, the Care Commission does register and regulate dental nurses, hygienists and dental technicians, so those staff members, they are often staff members within dental practices, are regulated by the Care Commission, but the dentists themselves are not. That could be seen as a *lacuna*, which should be addressed.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Now we do only have 10 minutes left and we have 6 questions left, obviously the question on COVID-19 took some time to deal with, so I do invite Members for the remainder of question time to, if they can, keep their questions and answers short and to consider if they really need to ask supplementaries to ensure we get through as many as we can of those questions that remain.