

21.06.08

15 Senator S.W. Pallett of the Chief Minister regarding Schools Mental Health Audits. (OQ.132/2021):

Further to Written Question 230/2021);, will the Chief Minister state when all primary, secondary and special schools in Jersey will be subject to a schools mental health audit to assist with improving the understanding of the mental health and behavioural needs of all schools and the development of individual school action plans? Will he advise who will undertake any such audit and whether they will be independent of government?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden of St. Helier (Assistant Chief Minister - rapporteur):

I will be answering the question on behalf of the Chief Minister if that is okay.

The Bailiff:

Very well, yes.

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

All schools are currently undergoing a full, independent review of inclusion by N.A.S.E.N., the National Association for Special Educational Needs. Part of the review will focus on the S.E.M.H., the social, emotional and mental health curriculum, and linked behaviours. The review includes an assessment of policy, practices, data and the voices of practitioners, parents, carers, pupils and charities supporting young people. The specification in relation to the schools mental health audit is currently being written and is in addition to the work N.A.S.E.N. is undertaking with the inclusion review. As this piece of work will be under the £100,000 threshold, there is a requirement to obtain 3 quotations. The opportunity to tender will be published on the States of Jersey tender portal within the next few weeks and will be openly advertised for 4 weeks, which is to ensure fairness and value for money. The audit provider will be independent of government and we plan for the audit to commence early in the autumn term. The outcome of the independent inclusion review by N.A.S.E.N. and the additional independent mental health school audit will enable the training and development of multi-agency practitioners, both in schools and the wider community, in developing greater understanding of mental health, thus supporting the individual school action planning.

3.15.1 Senator S.W. Pallett:

Can I thank the Assistant Chief Minister for his answer, which was, I have to say, very thorough? But could he give us some indication as to when this review will be complete and the findings will be available?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

I do not have the date of when we will finish that. We know we want to start in the early autumn term. I think once we have the people in, whoever wins the tender, to come and have a look at the breadth of what needs to be done, they will be able to give us a better understanding of delivery and I will update the Senator when that has happened.

3.15.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

On completion, whenever that date may be, is the Minister confident that there will be the resources to address the issues that will be uncovered by such an audit? Because if that is not the case, not only have we wasted money on an audit but we have not addressed the issues that will arise.

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

I could not possibly know what resources will be required before the audit is completed, so I am afraid I cannot answer that question due to the fact that without the information from the audit I will not know what resources are required.

3.15.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Is the Minister aware of the current needs which we all know are growing, particularly following COVID, in terms of mental health, not just anecdotally but because of the number of referrals that have been happening to C.A.M.H.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services), et cetera? Does he believe that resources are currently adequate, and after an audit which would suggest that these would increase will he be pushing for the adequate resource or will there be a limit to the amount of money that he is willing to spend on this area?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

I thank the Deputy for his question on this. We have made great strides in providing and recruiting more people into the area of mental health to look after not just children but the Island. We are still recruiting. Do I think resources are enough? I think that we are getting in the right direction and we are continuing to try and recruit and bolster that area, which is showing greater and greater need all the time. I will, on the second part of the question, definitely be fighting for all the correct resources after the audit is finished.

3.15.4 Senator T.A. Vallois:

Can I ask the Assistant Minister how this audit and the inclusion review will fit in with the current consultation on mental health for young people?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

I think this audit will be more around the schools and what is required in there. The mental health review looks at the wider picture of the Island and what is required, so I see them working alongside each other to give us a better picture overall holistically of what is required for Jersey.

3.15.5 Senator S.W. Pallett:

I think most of us would agree that there is an issue with young people's mental health at the current time. I am not going to use the word "crisis" but there are issues. I certainly understand the need for an audit, but in terms of the now and while we are waiting for this audit, could the Assistant Chief Minister give us some idea of how he is going to achieve some consistency, especially within secondary schools, about support for mental health for young people?

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

We have been working on that through C.A.M.H.S. and through the family hub to make sure that we have the resources. I am very proud of the team and how much we have managed to bring forward support and help for young people in mental health provision. I believe that the team are doing a fantastic job and we are trying to deliver on the mental health action plan right now to make sure that we have the right people in the right place at the right time and that we are listening to the children to find out what their needs are through services like Kooth and Y.E.S. (Youth Enquiry Service).

The Bailiff:

Very well, adding a little bit for injury time, there is time for one further question before the period for questions with notice comes to an end.