

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES
BY SENATOR S.W. PALLETT
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 6TH DECEMBER 2021
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 13TH DECEMBER 2021**

Question

Following the publication of Jersey Homelessness Strategy more than one year ago, will the Minister state –

- (a) what he is currently doing to understand and define homelessness fully in Jersey;
- (b) how, if at all, he is evidencing the scale and nature of homelessness in Jersey and whether such evidence will be presented to Members;
- (c) whether he has established a complex needs team to take responsibility for dealing with the housing needs of the most vulnerable and, if not, why not;
- (d) how he is providing a housing ‘safety net’ to ensure that anyone at risk of homelessness gets the help they require to prevent this happening;
- (e) how he is actively supporting private sector tenants and landlords to promote positive relationships; and
- (f) whether the delivery plan for the strategy is monitored quarterly and whether he will commit to providing quarterly updates to Members; and, if not, why not?

Answer

- (a) One of the immediate actions of the Jersey Homelessness Strategy is to clearly state the agreed definition of homelessness for consultation and approval by the Government of Jersey and Jersey Homelessness Strategic Board. A four-tiered definition of homelessness was supported by stakeholders when the strategy was developed, encompassing, rooflessness, houselessness, insecure and inadequate housing.

The four conceptual categories of homelessness –rooflessness, houseless, insecure, and inadequate housing – are already adopted in Government policies and procedures such as Phase 3 of the plan outlined in R.32/2021: Ministerial Response to the Jersey Homelessness Strategy. These categories will continue to be used for policy and operational purposes prior to the introduction of a statutory definition of homelessness.

A Jersey definition is needed to increase understanding of the issues and provide a criterion for any future service provision, and I will work with our partners to develop an agreed definition during 2022.

- (b) As Minister I receive regular updates in terms of islanders accessing accommodation as well as the number of islanders who are roofless. Officers work closely with The Shelter Trust and others to monitor the use of accommodation across the island and this information can be presented to Members. In addition, Statistics Jersey will collect information as part of the 2021 Census on the number of homeless persons in the island, including rooflessness and that information will be made available in due course.
- (c) Customer and Local services have introduced the Critical Support team, which The Housing Advice service sits within. Overarching objectives of this team is to support islanders with significant and complex vulnerabilities in a holistic, person centred way, working in collaboration with stakeholders. Targeted accommodation support is at the forefront of operations, the service is currently consulting with Homeless link, a UK based Charity, to develop the offer and deliver homelessness prevention.

- (d) The Shelter Trust are commissioned to provide accommodation and outreach support for anyone at risk of becoming homeless. This includes supporting people who are also at risk of becoming roofless. In addition, Officers work closely with providers and civil society to support islanders who need a safety net. In many cases a range of complex factors need to be addressed to ensure that a safety net is provided. This includes access to drug and alcohol specialists, access to General Practice, which is in place at The Shelter Trust as well as mental health support.

To further enhance the safety net the Government has supported through fiscal stimulus, a new female only shelter which will provide an additional 21 beds for vulnerable women.

- (e) As Minister I meet with tenant and landlord representatives to listen to their concerns or ideas and explain my programme of policy delivery. Earlier this year I had a constructive discussion with representatives of the Jersey Tenants Forum, who offered their views on COVID-19 emergency legislation and allowed me to advise them on the related government guidance around evictions and rent increases. The Deputy Chairman of the Jersey Landlords Association (JLA) attended my inaugural Strategic Housing Partnership meeting in September. As a result of this engagement the JLA will now make an important contribution to the review of how housing and homelessness services are delivered in Jersey. As part of my Fair Rents Plan, published later this month, I will set out a programme that will offer greater consumer protection for private sector rent increases and will seek to enhance the protections of the Residential Tenancies Law, to the benefit tenants and landlords alike. These actions will be predicated on fostering better dialogue between both these parties.
- (f) There is an external Jersey Homelessness Strategic Board which brings together the Private Sector, Civil Society, Government Officers and Providers who are monitoring and supporting the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy. I will be meeting with the Board and will be able to provide regular updates to Members on the progress made. In addition I have invited the Chair of the Board to join the newly formed Strategic Housing Partnership.