

2024.04.16.

4.3 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the publication of Jersey's Maternity Strategy (OQ.66/2024)

Will the Minister provide an update on the publication of Jersey's maternity strategy?

Deputy T. Binet (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

Development of the maternity strategy is nearly complete and a draft has recently been shared with key stakeholders. These include medical, midwifery and support workers, along with service users and Maternity Voices Partnership. The process will continue and we will plan to present firstly to the H.C.S. leadership team during May, with the intention of publishing sometime during June.

4.3.1 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Could the Minister advise of the reasons behind the delay?

[10:00]

Also, could the Minister give an indication of perhaps the top 3 findings or recommendations or actions that are in that report?

Deputy T. Binet:

Two things, I was not aware that there had been a delay. I have not yet had a copy sent to our department, so I am afraid I am not in a position, at this stage, to answer that question properly.

4.3.2 Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Given recent media coverage around an inquest that took place, is the Minister able to take the opportunity to reassure Islanders that Jersey's maternity services are safe and fit for purpose?

Deputy T. Binet:

Yes, I believe they are now.

4.3.3 Deputy I. Gardiner:

Would the Minister believe that once he will have a question in the States about the maternity strategy, he just try to read the review that was the pre-maternity strategy development, which was published 3 years ago, and be ready to answer our questions?

Deputy T. Binet:

Sorry, I was a little bit confused by that question. Could I ask the Deputy to repeat it?

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Absolutely. The Minister was aware that he will be questioned in the States about the maternity strategy. Does the Minister think it is appropriate to read a review that was done about maternity services 3 years ago, which suggested to write the strategy?

Deputy T. Binet:

I think in theory that is all well and good. If somebody could find me an extra day in the week to read reports from 3 years ago, I would be most grateful. At the moment, I am not able to take on any more than I am doing, and I have been in post for 10 weeks, so I hope I can be forgiven for not having read every single document relating to every area of health.

4.3.4 Deputy R.S. Kovacs of St. Saviour:

Can the Minister commit that in the new maternity strategy will be a proper assessment of the ongoing needs of the U.N.I.C.E.F. (United Nations Children's Fund) baby-friendly initiative as well, and that the resources allocated be appropriate to it?

Deputy T. Binet:

On the face of it, yes. As I say, it is not an area that I have had a great deal of time to consider. I will do over the course of time, but in principle that sounds fine.

4.3.5 Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement:

Can the Minister just explain, having told us that he knows maternity services are safe, how he has arrived at this conclusion?

Deputy T. Binet:

I have had various conversations with one of the 4 members of the turnaround team whose specialist area that is. Short of going and standing in the maternity unit for a couple of weeks to see what is going on, I think you have to trust people in these situations. I certainly trust her and the good work that she has been doing.

4.3.6 Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Has the Minister got any evidence to suggest that maternity services are safe?

Deputy T. Binet:

Evidence that I can produce right here and now, no. But if the Deputy wants further evidence, I am happy to provide it to her.

4.3.7 Deputy M. Tadier:

With regard to the Minister's answer, that he does not have time to read reports from 3 years ago, that may be the case but does he not think he could ask his officers to provide summaries of work that has gone on before, those who do have the corporate memory, to give a précis of what has happened, or perhaps ask one of his many Assistant Ministers to also look into those areas?

Deputy T. Binet:

I am sorry, now I think we have got to be reasonable. As I say, there are so many hours in the day and I get a lot of briefings, a lot of the time from a lot of very good people. So I am afraid I make no apology. I have not covered every area. I shall be looking at maternity in the fullness of time.

4.3.8 Deputy M. Tadier:

I think the Minister has misunderstood my intention, is that now that he has been appraised of the issue by the Deputy and other Members in the Assembly, would he simply go back to his staff, discuss this report that has been alluded to and other matters, and then report back, either publicly or privately, to those Members about whether their concerns are justified?

Deputy T. Binet:

I genuinely thought I had indicated that that is exactly what I was going to do. But if it needs to be stated more clearly, then absolutely.

4.3.9 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Will the Minister be able to achieve the necessary funding in order to make our maternity services safe?

Deputy T. Binet:

I alluded earlier that I would be coming back to the Assembly in the coming months on matters of funding to do with Health. I do not think I can say very much more than that. I am happy to say that I think the health service needs a lot more money than it has at the moment, so rest assured I will be coming back to discuss that in more detail.