

STATES OF JERSEY

Health, Social Security and Housing Panel Co-ordination of Services for Vulnerable Children Sub Panel

THURSDAY, 18th MARCH 2010

Panel:

Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier (Vice Chairman)

Connétable S.A. Yates of St. Martin

Connétable D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence

Deputy D.J. De Sousa of St. Helier

Witness:

Mr. A. Williamson

[15:02]

Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier (Vice Chairman):

First of all, welcome Mr. Williamson. It is a while since we have seen each other. First of all may I apologise for the absence of our Chairman, Alan Breckon, who is away in the U.K. (United Kingdom) for a funeral. But the rest of the panel are here. Constable Deidre Mezbourian of St. Lawrence, Constable Yates, Deputy De Sousa, and me, the Vice Chairman, Geoff Southern. May I draw your attention to the notice in front of you of the terms in which you appear.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Thank you.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

They are not very onerous and fairly clear but if you just take a minute to read them.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Thank you.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

We have agreed that you are comfortable with being filmed by the media.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

My understanding of the development of the protocol on filming these things is that we have yet to reach agreement on ordinary members of the public filming so my ruling at this meeting would be members of public will not be allowed ...

Male Speaker:

What is the rule that the cameras will not film a member of the public if they do not wish to be filmed?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I certainly am quite happy to do that. Does any member of the public not wish to be filmed?

Male Speaker:

I do not wish to be filmed at this stage.

Male Speaker:

Shall we swap seats then, Sir. Or there are some other public seats that you might ...

Male Speaker:

I will go there. Thank you very much.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Thank you. That is fine because they will take lots of shots of you and the back of my head, which is fine by me. I get the pleasure of starting off which is always the very easy questions first. So the first question is how long have you been in post, in your current post, and could you briefly describe what you are doing and then go on to talk about ... we have got 14 recommendations from your report, God knows how many from our report on your report, but certainly concentrating on the 14 that you said: "This is what we will do." If you could just tell us a little bit about where the priorities are for you and initial progress.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Okay, thank you very much. Thank you for the invitation today. It is difficult to say when I started because I started with some quite significant commitments so I was away for basically the whole of January and so I did manage to get over before Christmas but really kicking in in a sense now, but I have been in touch virtually every day in some format. But that was known before because my diary does get booked up a bit, as we all do.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

The terms under which you are employed?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Right, it is a daily basis and I have brought the ... when I got the request to come back, it is to help with the job description for the role of Director of Community and Social Services. One of the issues now, of course, is we have a new Chief Executive appointed to the overall department, to be in charge of the department and I have arranged to meet her because obviously it will be her department and I just want to check on that. To oversee the development of the Children's Plan for Jersey - and I would like to talk more about that - oversee and advise upon the organisational

restructure of Health and Social Services to create a children's directorate. Now, that may not be within the wishes of the new Chief Executive, I do not know, but clearly it is crucial that we work together for the sake of the frontline staff and for the sake of the service to the people of Jersey. Provide independent expert advice to the ministerial team regarding development of services to vulnerable children in Jersey and to manage all stakeholder relationships as appropriate. So really I have been over quite a few times before Christmas and more recently the last 2 or 3 weeks, and I was over here for the interview process acting as an independent member of the panel. I was asked to be on that. I have seen some significant progress in what we are doing and what is happening here but also I am well aware inevitably ... the pressures in safeguarding children across England have been very significant over the last few months with Haringey. So I am well aware of pressure on frontline social services.

Connétable D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence:

Mr. Williamson, you have just said that you were involved in the interview, is that correct?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I was a part of the interview panel.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

The panel for the new Chief Officer?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Chief Executive, yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Okay, so as opposed to producing the job description for the Director of Community and Social Services, that is something completely different?

Mr. A. Williamson:

It is, and I have got some of the best models - that are regarded as the best models - of those jobs. I obtained those before Christmas but I just want to put that on hold, that piece of work, until the new Chief Executive feels comfortable about the sort of structure she wants and so on. I think that is only reasonable for all involved.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

So you say you helped to advise the Minister on the choice of new Chief Officer?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I was part of the interview process.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Part of the board. Okay, so you wrote the plan that is now being implemented, the first question is where do you see the priorities, and possibly what sort of progress has been made on those particular areas?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Thank you. I think part of the ... one of the overriding feelings for me from my investigation was the need for an overall Children's Plan involving all the key

departments but also the voluntary sector and groups out there who are representing children and so on. I am very pleased to see the work that is going on there and the formation of the Children's Policy Group at ministerial level. It has met 3 times, I think, now and has got a diary of meetings planned for this year. So I can feel some very tangible signs of progress and of departments working together.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is the Children's Plan presumably to fit all children on the Island?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

It is not about vulnerable children in particular?

Mr. A. Williamson:

No, no, and it is about use of your money, your resources. When I was here doing my investigation I went to a number of the schools and met head teachers and so on and have seen some of the strengths, some of the buildings, Jersey Youth Service, so it is about bringing all of that together so that residents of Jersey know what it is ... the level of service they can expect.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

The definition of children, is that from 0 to what age?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I do not think that has been totally clarified in truth, but for me it certainly is from the way we use maternity services, the support that a new mother needs and wants, the way we support young children, going to school, after school activities, the C.A.M.H.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) service and so on. It is about all of that bringing ... I have seen all the aspects of it, I think I can say that - it is always brave to say you have seen all of the aspects but I visited lots of places - and it is about trying to get it into one coherent structured plan.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

To age?

Mr. A. Williamson:

In my head it has always been 18 but it is a moveable feast at the moment. Why I am slightly hesitant is you probably know that in England it has gone ... children and adults have separated. The departments again have separated the services post Herbert Laming's report into Victoria Climbié. I will just give my age away I suppose, I started a long, long time ago as a child care officer and one of the issues then was making sure that the adult department knew about, say, a 17 and half year-old with a profound disability. So I do not believe it should be a permanent ... a clear cut off point at someone's 18th birthday or 19th birthday, somebody might need long term help. Because we have kept one organisation here we should be able to make sure that does not happen here.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Before I ask Debbie to carry on, it just occurs to me that you talked about this multi-agency approach across the Island. What would be your view on the decision to withdraw full-time social workers from the state secondary school, which I believe has happened? We used to have a social worker in each secondary school. They have been withdrawn. What are your thoughts on that?

Mr. A. Williamson:

My understanding is that the ... is this the M.A.S.T. (Multi Agency Support Teams) development?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Yes.

Mr. A. Williamson:

I did visit 2 of the schools and I remember spending some time with the social worker at Le Rocquier and with the head teacher and was very impressed with work I saw going on there. My understanding is that the advert is out today, I think, for a further complement to make sure that each of the secondary schools has a social worker. But I think the issue is about how they are managed and where they are located. I think it is more about the management but I was very pleased to see ... let me just make sure I do not mislead you, I am pretty sure the advert is out today, this week sorry, and it is to strengthen that team and then there will be a discussion with the relevant people about how best to manage ... I think it is this issue always about you are a single-handed person from one profession working in a group with others, how did they link, how did they get their training, their professional support and so on. But that is the issue, I do not think it is about the service. In fact I am very pleased to say to you that that has been developed.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Good. It is nice to know we have contributed.

Deputy D.J. De Sousa of St. Helier:

Can I firstly ask, you intimated in the beginning that you have only just really started to settle into this post and that we are going to have a new Chief Officer, so it is more or less in limbo until she takes over, is it?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Well, no. I want to make sure that Julie is fully involved but I think the thing you cannot afford to do is to have frontline staff working in limbo. They need to know who their manager is, if there is a crisis on a Saturday night who do they phone and so on. That is the business ... that is the social care world that we are in. If you are looking after children's homes, if you are looking after fostering services, you need to know that the out of hours services are working efficiently and so on. It is not on hold. The Children's Plan, there is a commitment from the Minister to get the first draft to the States before the end of this year and that will be delivered, I am confident about that. The follow on from that about corporate working, development of the M.A.S.T. teams and so on, I mean the progress that I monitored today ... I did quite a few days before Christmas but I think with having had that month in between I just did not want to give a misleading answer.

[15:15]

Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

Okay. You have made several recommendations and you have touched on the Minister and her role. How do you see that moving forward now?

Mr. A. Williamson:

The ministerial role?

Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

The Minister taking accountability.

Mr. A. Williamson:

I was very, very pleased with the Children's Policy Group. I have been to 2 of their meetings and I think that there is a real sense of wanting this to work, wanting to work together, wanting to get the best return on the resources and it just feels to me that there is a very clear acceptance that the departments, by working together, will produce better results.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Can you tell us who the Children's Policy Group is? Is this a rose by any other name? Is it the corporate parent that failed before?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I could not comment on that one.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

You cannot or you will not?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Well, to be fair, I did not attend meetings in the past for whatever reason but it is the Ministers for Home Affairs, Education and Children.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

So it is the corporate parent by any other name?

Mr. A. Williamson:

But they are there, they are all there with their Chief Officers and there was a very strong sense of people wanting this to work and working together.

Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

You said it seems as though the corporate parent looks as though they want to work together and move forward, what actual evidence do you have that it will not be exactly the same as it was before?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I know what you are saying. I think you will have the evidence. The Children's Plan is going to be a States of Jersey published document which will make commitments about working together, about better use of resources, sharing resources and so on. So I think you will see the evidence but also at the last meeting there was a discussion

about the Youth Justice Service and generally there was a measure of agreement in the room about the need to review all aspects of it and the paper was accepted and so on. So I feel quite optimistic about it. I hope you do not think I am being naive.

Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

No. Were there any areas within children's services that you really feel there was a severe lacking in knowledge and facilities to assist, i.e. people with Asperger's?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I am having to think back to the time when I was here a lot and visiting, and the time I spent. No, overall I am sure there is always more ... in the business we are in there is always more we can do and people that, I am sure, we can work better with. One of the main issues that was raised with me was access by professionals as well as by parents, out of hours and by schools and so on. So I think it was not about specific groups of children and young people that was raised with me but there were issues about access to social work support, pressure on some frontline staff, weekend cover, and that sort of stuff that was raised with me. I can see that. We are working on that.

Connétable S.A. Yates of St. Martin:

Mr. Williamson, I would like to ask a question, we understand from the department that a formal agreement and terms of reference for independent inspections of Jersey's social services have now been the subject of the Social Work Inspection Agency. Can you tell us more about this, please?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes. They are Scottish based. They are the inspection agency for Scotland, England has Ofsted. I am sure you will have heard of Ofsted. But the Scottish agency, I think, have got very good skills in helping ... it is not just about an inspection process, it is also about helping build confidence, frontline staff and so on. One of my great concerns 2 years ago was the effect of the reviews on frontline members of staff because you need them to feel confident, supported, professionally trained to make very complex decisions about children's lives. That is why one of my recommendations was to bring in an inspection agency, not in the sense of coming in in yet another formal process of inspection, which sometimes inspection can be just ticking boxes is the colloquial term, it is about also helping develop. So if areas are found that need to be developed that will be done by discussion. They are coming over at the end of May for a more full discussion about the process and I think the commitment is that the process is started before the end of this year.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

I have got a copy of an agreement but I was looking for terms of reference and I do not see anything headed "Terms of Reference", can you confirm that that has been agreed?

Mr. A. Williamson:

No I cannot tell you or confirm whether that has been signed or not but I know that I have got a date in my diary when they are coming over and we are meeting. We are looking at the end of May... the process starts by the end of the year. One of the things we have got to watch is just an overload of inspection. It is also about building confidence and morale again.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Could you confirm what you will be discussing and how frequently you think the meetings will take place?

Mr. A. Williamson:

It is about the process.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

How frequently will the inspections take place?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I think they are supposed to be bi-annual, are they not?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes, because of the size of the population and so on I would have thought you would not want it more than bi-annually. But also, and why I am slightly hesitant, I know the Scottish agency have developed or are in the process of developing - but are nearly finished - what I hear is an impressive in-house regulatory kit as well that staff can apply themselves. So you do not have to wait for somebody to come from outside, you will know or the Director will know whether things are working properly so I think that is worthwhile.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Yes, that sounds interesting. Thank you very much.

Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

You just said that the inspections will be bi-annual. In your report it works out there will be an inspection of some sort every year though, will there not, because in your report you recommend that one year it will be residential and secure accommodation and then the following year it will be the focus on the child protection services. So each one will run 2 yearly but there will be some sort of review every year, yes?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes, and I think that is what the Chief Executive will need, that confidence to know that it is always safe. I think it is good for you as well to know that there are people looking and talking to your young people at Greenfields or wherever on a regular basis. You have also set up a new board of visitors. That process is, I think, virtually completed as well. So you have got much more of an external view now which in our world I think is important.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Although the terms reference have not yet been agreed so you say, will they be looking at social worker caseloads?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I do not know if the terms of reference have been signed. I do not want to in any way give any false information today. I do not know that the contract has been signed but I know that we have got dates in diaries and it has been agreed. It could be there, I do not have a clue, honestly.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

So in that case are you saying that you had no input into the terms of reference?

Mr. A. Williamson:

My only input was saying at the beginning what I think needed to be done but I have not been involved in the individual negotiation. In terms of your question about the workload, the caseload for a social worker, that would be commented on if it was felt to be an impossible ... it is very hard to set a number, very hard, because you could have the 6 most complex cases, children, and if it involved court appearances or whatever, that could be absolutely a full workload or you could have a significantly higher number of young people who are going through an easier time in their lives. So I would not want to put a number on it as such but the important thing is that it is a managed workload and that the managers know when their frontline members of staff are under pressure.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

A report from the Health and Social Services Department themselves stated that social workers in Jersey operate caseloads far in excess of Lord Laming's recommendations. You must be aware of that.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

How do you think that could be addressed?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Well, it is a very interesting question because since Lord Laming wrote his report the post ... the Haringey ... Lord Laming was really on Victoria Climbié but post Haringey last year the social work profession I think has had a bit of a tough time and I think there are quite a few vacancies around nationally in England. Recruitment is much tougher and I hope here that we have made progress here... that sort of crisis of a couple of years ago, we are building now. That is what I am hopeful for, that we are rebuilding the confidence of frontline staff. Because you need that, you need them to make the right decisions every day of the week really and feel they are going to be supported in making the right decisions. So I am wary about putting a figure on caseloads simply because, as I said earlier, you can have an incredibly demanding time and be seen to have a very manageable number but you still need a lot of support at that moment because you are going through some very tough decisions.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

This is where I come in, I think. We had lots of discussion about how we deal with caseload and workload problems and one of them was about management and feeling supported which appeared to be less than successful in Jersey in the past. Nonetheless, when you come down to it ... I remember when we talked about funding for the Williamson implementation, you probably noticed the great big red blodge across the timescale there where money was withdrawn and that was from Laming compliance. So do you feel that there is funding in place to enable an improvement of ratios so that workloads can go down and (b) can you tell us more about any progress

on recruitment of social workers. We know we have just hit a complete trough of nurses, we suspect there are serious problems with recruiting social workers. Have we done any recruiting and how do you see that going forward?

Mr. A. Williamson:

As I understand it, some recruitment has been undertaken and I think whereas the initial response might have been less than 2 years ago, you still made appointments. I think in some parts of the U.K. that is not happening, it is a struggle and I think that ... 2 things tend to happen after a major child protection case, and the one before Christmas is a classic. One is that the referral numbers go up for the frontline staff because people are obviously more wary and (2) because of that people get to feel under pressure and look sometimes to make career decisions. But my understanding is - and I do not have the vacancy rate today - certainly from recent adverts we have appointed but I think everybody is noticing it. We are not getting that first response that we used to get here but you are in a better place than other parts of the U.K.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Are you aware of any pressures particularly on funding for the initiatives that you see going forward?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Not really. There are some issues where we need to have more discussion and I think that will be really based as well on the Children's Plan - you mention the social workers, there has also been a number of posts given to the ... the therapy, psychotherapy services, for the C.A.M.H.S. service and so on. So I think it is how all of that is used, the extra money is used, to make sure it is used properly and effectively and that the teams work together. For example, I do not think that the out of hours access need cost a huge amount of extra money because we have got staff that work through the night now and so on, in terms of referral points. I am not saying they go out.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Very specifically, have you heard the dreaded words "comprehensive spending review" issued in your presence yet? Are you coming under any pressure for the 10 per cent savings that every department is supposed to be examining in order to make them within 3 years?

[15:30]

Mr. A. Williamson:

I have not come personally under pressure. I have certainly heard the term and I think ...

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is that a worry for you?

Mr. A. Williamson:

One of the worries is that - and I say this based not on here but on my working life generally - the difficulty is that you inevitability ... you know the legal requirements that you have to meet and the difficulty is that you can start cutting back on what are

called the sort of preventative services. With my recommendations I do not want ... I would hate a point where all of that was funded but the building blocks that could be crucial are being affected so I just want time to really think this one through. As I understand it, it is recommendations rather than definitive decisions... there has got to be some recommendations made about the spending review but I do not necessarily know that they are going to all be accepted. I think there is some way to go on this one. I feel as though I have been down this road a few times in my working life.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Probably as you, I think correctly, point out it is the preventative services, the minority services, that tend to feel the brunt of any pressure when it comes to spending. We were particularly concerned in talking about funding arrangements for those non-stigmatising preventative services that we have already got. We were talking about something like £900,000 we were recommending towards people like the N.S.P.C.C. (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) and the services that they are doing. Things like Brighter Futures, again preventative, non-stigmatised services accessible to all families, hopefully preventing more serious work needing to be done later on. How do you feel about funding for those because their funding seems to be vulnerable?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Based on my time here, my visits here, and I spent some time with Brighter Futures and certainly went to Pathways with the N.S.P.C.C., I was impressed by the work I saw. My recommendation was that we should have clearer contractual approaches so everybody knows how long the funding is for. Because I think in the voluntary sector, as it is called overall, they need the confidence to know that their funding is secure for say 3 years or whatever but it would be reviewed after 2 and then a new contract drawn up. That is taking place much, much more now. I think it gives confidence to the providers of the service that it is not just a hand out once a year because after 6 months you start the process again really. So overall I think ... I am told that the S.L.A. (Service Level Agreement) process is starting now and it will be part of the Children's Plan as well. The Children's Plan should give you the information about the organisations, what each part of Jersey wants to look like in terms of its services for children, what should be available, what activities and so on. That will give you the basis of understanding what sort of service level agreements you need with providers, whether it is the N.S.P.C.C. or Action for Children or whoever, to provide those services. Jersey Youth Service is one that comes to my mind. It is an impressive service and I think there is lots of things there that we can get from them by working together.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

But one that is, unfortunately, non-statutory as you said before.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Just changing direction slightly, you mentioned at the beginning that delivery of the Children's Plan was the priority and yet one of your terms of reference is to oversee and advise upon the organisational restructure of half the social services in order to

create a children's directorate. How do you balance the delivery of the Children's Plan when, of necessity, you are here to advise upon the organisational restructure?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I think the answer is by working in collaboration with the Chief Officers and Ministers of the Children's Policy Group, the new Chief Executive, involving her soon, straightaway, and we have got dates in the diary to meet to look at how she sees the structure based on her background and so on. It is crucial that we do not constantly keep reorganising. So I would rather take an extra ... a short amount of time to work with the new Chief Executive to get it right for her as well as the frontline staff here and so on. But I am working on structures all the time and looking at what seems to be working well not just in England but in other places about shared services and so on. I am trying to keep an up to date record of best practice.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

How do you define restructure? Does it mean removal of staff, change of staff?

Mr. A. Williamson:

No, for me restructuring tends to be about you look at the demands on the service, a good illustration at the moment is the number of young people in residential care provisionally are older, much older because of the success of the fostering service. So whereas as 10 years ago you probably did not have a dedicated team for fostering, I do not know but you probably did not. I have been through quite a few moves, changes like that about the demand at the frontline ... people need to be reorganised, regrouped to make sure you can meet the demands that are coming in. That does require change from time to time. I just want to make sure that we have got the service that can best use the staff you have got to deliver that service.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Okay, thank you.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

We have just heard of the service level agreement with Brig-Y-Don and that has gone forward, and that is part of an overall reduction in the number of beds as we say but that in turn is dependent upon the fostering and adoption service. We were quite sceptical when we were producing our report last year of the projections that were being made that fostering and adoption could achieve the sort of changes that were necessary. Have we any evidence yet that that is happening, because they have had a new recruitment drive?

Mr. A. Williamson:

They have had a new recruitment drive, I think you are doing better than other parts of the U.K. but you have got a very clear approach to developing the fostering service with good support. Inevitably there are different challenges that are coming through, Housing and so on come to mind, but overall I think it is on an upward track. The issue I think is going to be, for the next 3 to 4 years, the number of younger people, 15, 16, 17s, coming through the system of residential provision who will be leaving and needing support. But at the moment they tend not to be the group that go into foster homes because they would have been in residential care for quite a long time. So it will be about supporting them as they come through and I have seen some plans

this morning that show they quite clear, they know what the demands. I went to St. Mark's this morning when I first came in and then went to Les Chenes to see the proposed bedsits and looked at the plans, and it is just waiting now the final approval so you do feel as if there are some very, very good plans out there and we are on the way.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

We talked quite a lot last time we met about the idea of the professional fostering, is that something you feel is becoming inevitable or would that be advantageous?

Mr. A. Williamson:

It has to be on the table for you. I cannot answer that specifically today but I would just urge you ... I think you should always keep all your options open. There could be some young people that are placed in residential schools or whatever in England and we could better use the money and keep Jersey children in Jersey. That is one of the impressive aspects of the service here, that it does try to keep young people here. I would never say to a fostering service that we get to a point where it stops and we will constantly be looking at different techniques to encourage people to come into it.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

I would like to ask a couple of questions on your recommendations in your implementation plan. What progress has been made first of all on recommendation 10 which is to develop a link between Greenfields secure unit and La Moye offender's wing with the Jersey Child Protection Committee and to ensure that the safeguarding responsibilities are maintained? Recommendation 10.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Okay, the links between La Moye and Greenfields I think are being developed.... A new board of visitors, I think, has been appointed by the Jersey Child Protection Committee, the J.C.P.C. I think that process is just going through now and that sounds to me to be a very good development. The J.C.P.C. is clearly developing. I went to a meeting there just before Christmas and I was with them for the day and you could really feel again a desire to work together with all the agencies but I do not underestimate there is some way to go.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Some way to go yet?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes. Well, in terms of ages, in terms of using La Moye in terms of separate accommodation and so on, those things are ... but they have been developed and there is certainly some progress been made.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Okay, that is something to look out for. The other one was recommendation 11 which is to replace the present emergency duty system which uses the police service by one which uses the 24 hour Health and Social Services availability.

Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

There was talk, was there not, with that of possibly using the fire service/ambulance service telephone communications to fund it rather than the hospital, was there not?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes. Part of the point for this recommendation was that there was some dissatisfaction among some of the people that came to see me about wanting to get access out of hours or weekends and yet retaining confidentiality of their family business. So not going through a third agency but getting straight to the Social Services out of hours service. It was only really about how they are contacted on a Saturday night or a Sunday morning or whatever. I just really raised the point that this is worth looking at and I do not think it need cost a lot of money. You have got staff that are working for you now at weekends. We are only talking about that first contact point. We are not talking about them then going out to do the call. We have people now on duty, as it is called, at weekends. So it was really about just smartening up the access and, as I understand it, I am just reading a note here, the out of hours agreement for frontline staff has been reviewed and an updated version is currently being discussed with the frontline staff about what ...

The Connétable of St. Martin:

This will solve your recommendation? Or it will complete your recommendation.

Mr. A. Williamson:

It says they are taking an inclusive review of current arrangements for access out of hours, looking at it all but it is something I think we can make quick progress on.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Good, thank you very much.

Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

Because the query as well with this, if I am not wrong, was that it was felt that somebody should do like a triage to see if it was important enough to involve frontline Social Services staff. So the phone call goes somewhere, gets assessed, if it is really dire they call in Social Services, if it is not they try and deal with it, is that right?

Mr. A. Williamson:

It is on that theme. It was on that theme but it was also about people who came to see me - and it was not that many to put this into context - saying: "If I have got a family crisis I do not particularly want to phone another department to tell them I have got a family crisis because it is confidential so I would like to get straight to somebody in the Social Services, in the children's services particularly, for help in a confidential way." All I was saying in my recommendation was I do not think this is going to break the bank. I think there are ways of dealing with this, especially with new mobile phone technology and so on, I am sure we can do it. I am pleased to see that is being reviewed.

Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

Can I just ask one other question? It is slightly off track. Did you feel in your investigation for your report that there was any sort of discrimination when cases go to the Family Court, i.e. maybe more in favour of mothers rather than fathers?

[15:45]

Mr. A. Williamson:

I did not. Thinking back ... and I want to be very careful with this answer because I know some of the debates and there may be some people working in the department who give a different answer, I have been absolutely clear - and am trying to be clear with you throughout the process - that I really have to base my recommendations and my understanding of the system on what was said to me by the 80 plus people that wanted to talk to me but also my visits. It was an issue that was pointed out to me but I never had any evidence that that was the case. So I am probably not the person to answer that.

Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

All right.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I am going to wrap 2 or 3 things together. I do not think you mentioned that attached to the independent bi-annual by the Scottish agency the recommendation below that was that a full-time independent reviewing officer be appointed and this is part of planning for the children's future, the looked after children, guaranteeing that sort of "This is the way forward for you" and involving people in their own futures. That also ties into a pet project of mine about self advocacy within the vulnerable children sector. Again, for advocacy there was talk late last year that that funding was going to be pulled from that and we were given guarantees that, no, that was going to go ahead, they would put it back in. Where are we with those initiatives at this stage, do you know?

Mr. A. Williamson:

My update, which is today especially for this meeting, is that the job description has been developed for the reviewing officer, the external reviewing officer, we have put them in touch with other local authorities in the U.K. to see how ... the ones I feel generally I think it is acknowledged provide the best quality services, just to see how they are doing it and what freedom that post has and who that post reports to and so on. How independent is independent is one of your questions really, because if you are totally on your own it is probably not a job that attracts many people. It is the sort of job where you do want to have colleagues around you and also want to feel confident that you can say: "This is not good enough." A support person is already working on the numbers that have to be done each time and so on. So I think the process ... no, I do not think. This says that the process is happening and it will be out to advert quite soon, I imagine. I do not know what the H.R. (Human Resources) process is from when the job description has been agreed to when the advert goes out. So that is one. With the advocacy service I am hastily looking through my notes because I am not sure and I do not want to give an incorrect answer. I am not sure about the funding on that one. I am unclear so I am sorry about that. I will make some inquiries.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

That is fine. That means we can have the department in and talk specifically about it.

Mr. A. Williamson:

I will just have a quick look down and see if I can see it.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

What happened last year was it was whipped out - it is not great amounts of money, £75,000 et cetera - of the plan and said: "Oh, we will do that some time later." I tried to get it put back in at the time but I was given assurance that it was going to be funded.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Okay. I have got a note here that the Court Advisory Service ...

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Different issue.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes, and that is going ahead.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Yes, we are aware of that.

Mr. A. Williamson:

So at least coming in now with quite a number of the independent but constructive observations and reviewing about the quality of work and so on and protecting the users of the service.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Indeed.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Yes, I have got a little question for you.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

A little one from left field.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Yes. In 2008 another scrutiny panel produced a report on early years and one of our recommendations was that a children's commissioner should be appointed. We made that recommendation because we felt it was important that the child has a voice and that the child is listened to and the recommendation was put on hold really until after the publication of your report, because you were working on a report at a similar time, and their response was it should be considered following the publication of your report. Can you comment on how a children's commissioner would work in Jersey and in the Children's Plan how are they going to have a voice?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I am only hesitant because I do quite a bit of work with the Children's Commissioner in England through the Youth Offending Review. Here, because you have got this policy group now that is working and because we are getting all these other independent advocacy groups coming in to ensure that the independent reviewing officer ... I do not know in terms of whether given all the other financial pressures you

would still say that was a crucial post. What I would suggest is when the Children's Plan is ready and we have got the new Chief Executive and we have settled down a bit and got through the comprehensive spending review and so on that should be a post that you consider. But I think I would just get through the first ... you have got the inspection agency, you have got independent reviewing, you have got the new boards of visitors with training, you have got the J.C.P.C. with an independent chair, so there is a lot more independent reviewing coming in that will be able to assure you and the States that the services are of a good quality. But your point about having an advocate for children, yes, I can see ...

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

How do we give them a voice?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes, and I think there is a number of ways you can tackle that and maybe you do not need a full-time post in office, but maybe you do. But I do not say it is off the table. I definitely do not say that it is off the table.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

I will come back to the other part of my question. How are you going to give them a voice in the plan?

Mr. A. Williamson:

The users of the service? The parents and the children?

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Well, very much the children.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Oh, yes. That is part of the discussion with the person who is going to be drafting the report.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

So we will be asking you that next time we interview you, because you will know more about it then.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Fine. I mean it must not be just a bureaucratic exercise, the Children's Plan. It has got to reflect what people want.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

The intention was that children would have someone to turn to. They would know who they could turn to and that person would listen to them for a start and then speak and act on their behalf. Now we were very concerned, concerned enough to recommend it. It has not been implemented but those needs need and must be incorporated within the Children's Plan. You cannot have a plan for children without having some means of listening to them.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Indeed you cannot, but I want all frontline staff to be listening to the children that are in their care, I want the new M.A.S.T. social workers based in schools or attached to schools to be listening to parents and young people. So, yes, absolutely right to get the feedback. I think it is just a question of the process for that.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Yes, so we will watch with interest.

Mr. A. Williamson:

But I think let some of these first posts settle down would be my recommendation.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Okay, thank you.

Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

I have a couple of questions just to tie up. One of the main things that usually come out of these reports is accountability. Now, we know the Minister has accepted accountability which should now improve things because if there is a failure there will be someone who will take recourse. It is okay saying it, but we need to know that it is going to happen. What guarantees do you feel you could give to guarantee that this will happen?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I think you are ... what I hope will be avoided in the future is there will be so many ... and in a way it links with your point about the Children's Commissioner role. I think there will be so many ways to let you and States Members know about the quality of the service that they are receiving. Whether it is from a frontline social worker, whether it is from a school, whether it is from a midwife, whatever or from C.A.M.H.S., I think we have got enough. We are putting in a number of external points that should tell you and give you the confidence to say: "We have got a good service here." I went out with quite a few frontline members of staff and I was impressed. That is not to say it is all perfect. But I was impressed so I think you will get that from the function, for example, of the Ministerial Policy Group, how they work together. Their acceptance at the last meeting about the need to look at the youth justice system and some proposals were accepted there and then by all of them. So I just feel that the more openness we can have that gives everybody the right to say: "Yes, I am having a good quality of service" or: "No, I am not." You will find out about it. So I think it will be much harder to hide from you if there is a poor quality aspect to this service.

Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

More transparent.

Mr. A. Williamson:

It will be.

Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

A lot of your report was talking about numbers and that you felt that the residential system needed reconfiguring because there were going to be less people in care. Do you still feel that is the situation or do you feel it has slightly changed?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I think it is because of the success of the fostering service that there are fewer young people needing residential care. When I looked at the ages of the current residents of the children's homes this morning they are predominantly 14, 15, 16. You can increasingly find foster homes here for younger children. That will mean, and does mean, less demand. Now there is a bit of a bulge going through at the moment in the 16s and 17s so we need to make sure that they are supported and seen through and helped to move into the community. That is why the development proposals at Les Chenes for bed-sits, basically, but supervised, to help young people move on to the outside world is very good and needs supporting. So there will be a moment and it will not be long way away ... well, we are now looking at the use of all the homes and meeting demand. But because of the success of the fostering service I think that will follow through, that we will be able to reduce the number of residential beds. But you are developing, especially say at Brig-Y-Don for example, as well good facilities for leaving care which is an acceptance of responsibility.

Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

I have one final one which is very important if I could. Children who are looked after in care suddenly become adults. What do you see as the way forward to help with integrating and them having recourse to call back on support if they need it, because they are still vulnerable.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes, they are and I at St. Mark's this morning was hearing about some of those young people who do need support and I was very pleased to hear that they were getting that support. Yes, I think one of the issues ... because when I was writing the report post the Victoria Climbié report in England, the separation of the children's services and adult services was happening and I clearly had to consider that as a recommendation for here, and on balance felt that you have got some real advantages for the provision of local services here in your communities. You know people, you know the strengths and the supports in the system. I have spent some time at the Bridge and you can feel some of that local support. Also you have just ordered or purchased your new I.T. (Information Technology) system and to separate records again and so on I just felt overall the strengths of one department here should help us overcome your point about transition. Because somebody is not just 18 ... on their 18th birthday, or their 19th or whatever, they will say: "Hey, guys, I do not need any more help from anybody." That is not my experience of my family life and I am sure it is not of most people's and you need to be there for people in your family. So I think you have got the strengths by having one department and people knowing each other and strong communities that you can overcome that and it will not be a bureaucratic slip-up between what is called in England the Adults' Department and the Children's. That should not happen.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Deidre?

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Yes, I have got 2 more. The first one is going back to the Children's Plan itself and I have no doubt that it will be a well thought out plan, it will be deliverable and it will

do what it says on the tin. Nevertheless there will always be those people who will have or will want to make a complaint. We have got to accept that. Do you intend to include a robust complaints process within the plan itself?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

How will you be addressing that?

Mr. A. Williamson:

From the people I interviewed who wanted to talk to me I think making a complaint is hard in the business that we are in. It is hard. It is hard to make a complaint in the health service and it must be even harder here I think, in a smaller community where people know each other. But we do have a degree of independent oversight now and the complaint system will be as rigorous and confidential as we can make it.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Will it be encouraging? Will it be a process which will encourage people who may be afraid to speak out, who may have concerns, who may not perhaps be particularly articulate? Will it encourage them to voice their concerns?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I would like it to. I would like to see if we can make it that way. It means by helping people feel confident that they can say something is not good, but that is the way we are going to grow, that is the way we are going to develop and improve our services.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Will it be a system that does 2 things? That it allows a complainant to speak and will it resolve the complaint?

[16:00]

Mr. A. Williamson:

Well, hopefully. I mean, yes would be my answer. That would be surely the objective in the department, that we want it to be accessible, supportive, friendly, not off-putting. Also by having people based in different places like schools ... I think links to G.P. (General Practitioners) surgeries are crucial, the midwifery service, the health visiting service and so on and so on. Obviously the youth service. I do not want to be one route that people feel worried by. I think we have got to open up a lot of doors and be supportive in helping people if they want to make a complaint. Because I want to know. If we were not providing a good quality service I certainly want to know.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Would the same apply because you mentioned it in one of your recommendations about the whistle-blowing service as well and the key word there I think is independent. Would the same thing apply? Because we have had a second report, a *Verita Report* that has been severely critical of the atmosphere under which H.S.S.H. (Health, Social Security and Housing) is working.

Mr. A. Williamson:

I have read it. Yes, and last week the *Mid-Staffs* report in England was put out and you read them and just have to learn ... I am never complacent, that is for sure. I would hope the answer to you now is yes. On the grounds that if I was a frontline member of staff here and worried about some service somewhere and I have seen already the level of external review that is being brought in, I would feel confident that I could contact the J.C.P.C. now. I would feel confident. I hope that with the Independent Reviewing Officer, with the other boards of visitors and so on that I would hope already that people are beginning to think: "This is more open and I am more able to say what I really feel without comeback."

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I think that possibly depends on J.C.P.C. lifting their profile somewhat. I do not know that they are seen immediately as the first point of reference.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes, I mean they have got a very clear role and I am not suggesting that they should become the back door route for a complaints system, but I just feel that if I was a frontline member of staff in terms of the whistle-blowing question I would already feel more confident about the number of external people coming in and the external organisations and feeling that it is not just a closed shop.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Sure.

Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

You just touched on J.C.P.C. and that they have a very clear role. What do you see is their very clear role?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Gosh, a good last question.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Penultimate question, apparently.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Oh, right. Their role is to be the independent monitor of child protection services for Jersey and being aware of standards elsewhere, not just in England but what is going on in Europe. For example I am always interested in how Holland deals with child protection issues and so on. I think we have always got things we can learn. So I see the J.C.P.C. as the independent monitor and watchdog of the level of the quality of service that is provided by all of the agencies involved, not just the frontline social work staff but by all the agencies and links with schools and referral times and so on and so on. So a very good independent confident organisation that also provides training and development opportunities full stop. Together, cross-agency.

Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

That is vitally important, the training.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

I think mine may be the final question. I understand your title is Transitional Director, so we have been told. How transitional is transitional? How long are you here for and when are you going to have delivered?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I thought the last question was the last question. When will I know I have delivered? Obviously 2 or 3 things on that. One is I am very careful about the term Transitional Director and I will tell you why. It is crucial that frontline staff here know if there is a problem on Saturday night or Sunday lunchtime or whatever who is in charge. Who can make the decision. When I was a director in England I insisted that I would never want to be told that we did not allocate this child care case because we had not got any money, because that is my decision. I have to spend it if I have to. I am not having unallocated child protection. So I needed to know always and I do not want people here saying: "Oh, I thought Williamson was the director and he is not here, he does not live here." So I do not want to confuse line management. So that is why I tend not to use that title. I do not want to get in the way of frontline staff who know who their managers are and the system is working. If there was a problem here on Saturday night and 3 extra beds were needed, who is going to authorise the expenditure? I do not want to get in the way of that process because it seems to be working. So I am not over keen on the title but what I try to do is work as a team very much with the managers here but more and more as we get through and the Children's Plan is coming, that will be with all the other agencies as well so team building, working as part of the team. You said how long will I be here for? That will also I suspect ... I mean I will want to talk to the new incoming Chief Executive because I would not want her to feel that she was lumbered or whatever with ... I mean that has got to be a decision for the new Chief as well, but that I think takes me to mid-summer. But also there is a lot of strength here internally and we just need to ... I do not need to overstep and get in people's way. So I am certainly seeing it until this summer and an incoming new Chief Executive and help her feel settled and then ...

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Then?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Then we will see. Thank you very much.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Thank you very much.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

We may be seeing you again.

[16:09]