



## STATES OF JERSEY

### Health and Social Security Scrutiny Panel

**FRIDAY, 18th SEPTEMBER 2015**

**Panel:**

Deputy R.J. Renouf of St. Ouen (Chairman)

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

Deputy T.A. McDonald of St. Saviour

**Witnesses:**

The Minister for Housing

Director, Corporate Policy

Principal Planner, Island Plan Review

[09:33]

**Deputy R.J. Renouf of St. Ouen (Chairman):**

Right, so if I could begin the meeting, this is a public hearing of the Health and Social Security Panel in connection with the review we are undertaking in relation to the recruitment and retention of staff at the hospital. For the purposes of the tape-recording, we will introduce ourselves, if we may, Minister, then I will ask you to introduce yourself and your team. I am Deputy Richard Renouf and I am the Chairman of the panel.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Okay, first of all, can I say thank you for coming to meet us to assist us with our review? Minister, we have a letter that you kindly sent us initially dated 22nd July, and in the second paragraph of that you mention key worker accommodation, which of course is one of the aspects we are looking at in the course of our review, the accommodation of staff brought into the Island, and you say: "Key worker accommodation is identified as a priority in the draft housing strategy framework and is an area of work that the Strategic Housing Unit will review in 2015 and 2016." Can you perhaps elaborate on that and tell us how this priority is to be taken forward and what work you will be undertaking?

**The Minister for Housing:**

All right, thank you. Good morning, and thank you for inviting us to your Scrutiny Panel. As I said in that letter, over the last 6 to 9 months we have been putting together a strategic housing framework, a strategy framework. It is complete. We have gone out to interested stakeholders initially to get their comments on the final draft. They have been included all the way through, but we just needed to make sure that they were happy with what we were going to put in.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Does this include the Health Department as one of the stakeholders?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes. It is for consultation and so it is going to be released in the next 2 to 3 weeks for general consultation. I do not know whether you have got a draft copy of it, have you?

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

We do not.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

I have got a draft here.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Oh, I am sorry.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

This is mine. I just cannot resist picking things up.

**The Minister for Housing:**

We can make sure that you have got the latest copy that has gone out. In that, it does say that: “Ensure the supply of decent affordable homes” and how we will do this by point 5. I can read it out you: “Developing detached detailed housing plans for specific groups in order to provide them with the right accommodation” so very much specific areas of people, people with mental health issues, physical and learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorder, ex-offenders, young people, older people and key worker accommodation, so it is in there. But the most important part of that work regarding key workers is identifying what the actual need is and also coming up with a definition of what we mean by key workers. It will mean perhaps something different to Health and Social Services. Do we include teachers in there, do we include police, whatever? So we need to come up with a firm definition first. That work will take place towards the end of this year, next year, the beginning of that work.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Could you tell us how, in the absence of a housing department belonging to the States who can obviously clearly direct what the aims of housing are, you are going to deliver whatever you come up with in your appropriate packages through what is not a department of Government but an independent unit, as it were? How is that going to operate?

**The Minister for Housing:**

You mean a definition of what a strategic housing unit is? I think that is what you were trying to get at. The Strategic Housing Unit sets policy, as we know, the Housing Transformation Programme, which the States approved last year. Andium is now at an arm’s length, which comes under Treasury and Resources. The Strategic Housing Unit is there to set policy, but also working with social housing providers across the board, so not only with Andium, but with the other social housing providers as well as other interested stakeholders.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Again, I am looking at the connection between the Strategic Housing Unit and how you control what ends up on the ground.

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

Part of it is not just about control, it is about working co-operatively and working together. What we found is that the trusts are really keen to participate with the development of the strategy and the delivery of the strategy, so some are coming forward to us and saying: “We want to cater for specific groups”, some of these specific groups. Andium are very keen also to co-operate or to be part of the solution. In addition, we own Andium, so we have got a memorandum of understanding that says Andium’s strategic business plan is to be agreed by the guarantor. That is done in

consultation with the Minister for Housing and the strategic business plan therefore sets out the things Andium are going to do. The third thing is we are developing regulation with a view to giving the Minister powers, subject to consultation, to promote and direct the policies of the Assembly out to the providers, so a regulatory framework around policies and standards. I guess the 3 things are co-operation in the first instance, which I think has been pretty good, ownership of the largest provider in the second instance, and then regulatory regime in the third.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

You spoke, Minister, about seeking to define what a key worker is, but is it necessary to undertake that sort of work in depth, because is a key worker not the equivalent of the old term “essential employee” that we would bring in, such as teachers or nurses that come in on a licence?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Paul, with the Population Office, can define essential employee, but I do not see it as an essential employee necessarily being a key worker. I think that is why we need to define exactly what we mean by a key worker, because I know in the U.K. (United Kingdom) they have that very clear definition. We may end up similar to what the U.K. definition is, but we need to make Jersey-specific.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Is it possible that the Health Department could recruit some nurses who would not be considered key workers then?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I would not have thought so. It is not only nurses, it is social workers as well, it is mental health nurses, it is very much nurse specialists too. Do we include teachers, for instance? That is a question out for consultation that we need to ask.

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

I think the definition under the Control of Housing and Work (Jersey) Law, the old J cats, is an instructive start, but not all J cats in the public sector need specific help with their housing, so I think arguably a key worker for housing purposes might be narrower than the essential skills for migration purposes, but it would be a good start.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes, I understand what you mean. But for those who have come in, and in the past, for example, have been offered accommodation in the nurses’ accommodation, are there proposals to place

that block or that sort of accommodation under the control of Andium or to come within your remit rather than be administered by the Health Department?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I have to be careful what I say here now, because I am wearing my other hat when I was Minister. I think looking after accommodation per se, whether it is for nurses - and locum doctors are slightly different - is not the key core of Health and Social Services. I know that they have been trying and continuing to work with the Strategic Housing Unit and Andium to find a process of how we can get over that hurdle going forward, because we know that Health and Social Services have a lot of accommodation, I think 146 ... 200?

**Principal Planner, Island Plan Review:**

Nearly 250. But the key thing here is it is about a management issue, as the Minister was saying there, that the management of housing is probably best-placed with someone who does that day in, day out, like Andium. Equally, Andium have got a wider portfolio, if you like, of different types of properties, some of which might be suitable for different health workers. Equally, the Health stock now, some of it might be less suitable. There is potentially a management issue there. If we can resolve some of the business model issues in terms of the financing and ongoing maintenance and that type of thing, then clearly there is a benefit for both parties, but that is the sort of thing we need to work through. The first thing, as we were saying right at the beginning, going back to the definition of key workers, it is not just saying: "Oh, it is a nurse, it is a whatever" it is understanding what their needs are in terms of housing, where the gaps are in income levels, where there are shortfalls. We know historically that nurses, part of the package, if you like, for their pay was a housing component, and that was always subsidised, either as a hidden subsidy as part of their wages, because they got effectively lower rent through the housing allocation. If we then take that housing component out of Health and put into something like Andium managing it, that needs to be resolved as well. It is not a straightforward: "Would you give it to Andium?" There is a whole number of things you need to pick out of it first to understand the benefits for both parties.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Can I ask, has a decision been made to take that property portfolio out of Health?

**Principal Planner, Island Plan Review:**

Not at all, no. There has been no decision.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

But there are discussions, are there?

**Principal Planner, Island Plan Review:**

There are discussions.

**The Minister for Housing:**

There are discussions.

[09:45]

**Principal Planner, Island Plan Review:**

But I think we first need to understand the cohort of what the needs are of the existing staff, what their income levels are, where they are at the moment, where they are housed, what their future housing needs are. It is basically a detailed housing needs survey which we have done for the whole of Jersey for affordable housing, but applied to the health worker. We need to do that work before we really can understand how we go forward.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Okay, but can you explain to me how this might work if Andium or a social housing provider was to take over the stock of accommodation, because there is a waiting list, is there not, for housing that is usually managed by such groups, so if Health have recruited somebody to come to us at reasonably short notice, they are going to want to have some certainty about accommodation. How would that be managed by a social housing provider?

**Principal Planner, Island Plan Review:**

Do you want to ...

**The Minister for Housing:**

That is one of the 60 million dollar questions that we would need to work through with Andium. Doing that survey, understanding the actual needs, as Ralph said, like a housing needs survey particularly for key workers, after they are identified, is understanding that need going forward. But yes, you are right, we know that there is a housing waiting list. I envisage that the key workers, whatever definition we come up with, would be in a separate band within Gateway, be identified in that. But that needs to be worked through and understood. Yes, we know there is a shortage of housing.

**Principal Planner, Island Plan Review:**

We also understand that Health have got a certain number of units that they absolutely need for the short-term doctors and nurses that come in on a locum basis, so clearly part of the portfolio will

have to be completely ringfenced for that need. Again, it is not a straightforward transfer of anything, there are a number of details, things we have to go through.

**The Minister for Housing:**

Also, getting down the nitty-gritty, a nurse from the U.K., for instance, arrives here on a Saturday. Because all the flats, I understand, have got white goods included, and Andium do not include the white goods, but then she starts work first thing on Monday morning, so it is those little conundrums that we need to fully explore and understand.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Also the housing stock held by the hospital, by the Health Department, like much of the housing stock in Jersey, is in a poor state, much of it in disrepair.

**The Minister for Housing:**

I know they did a survey many years ago of that and they have got a programme of bringing ... all of them are in a good state of repair in some ways, because otherwise they would be uninhabitable and we cannot have that. There is some investment that has gone in over the years. But yes, more needs to be done to bring them up to decent homes standards.

**Principal Planner, Island Plan Review:**

Sorry, yes, I was just going to say I think they did a survey in 2013 and the percentage of non-decent homes at that point was 3.2 per cent, but obviously without any investment going forwards, that could rise. I think they say failures by 2018, if investment is not continued, is nearly 38 per cent, so I think it is all about ongoing investment, but at the current ...

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Substantial for properties that are on the verge.

**Principal Planner, Island Plan Review:**

That is right. It needs to be continually maintained, obviously, and there is an element of it which is currently non-decent or there was in 2013. Now we are 2 years down the line, so I would imagine that 3.2 per cent has probably crept up, if it has not been maintained, but I am not party to whether it has or has not been maintained.

**The Minister for Housing:**

That is a question that you would have to ask the Health and Social Services Minister.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

In a world where we are competing for, it seems, scarcer and scarcer funds, you have an impressive list there of groups that you want to help. Where does key worker accommodation come as a matter of priority?

**The Minister for Housing:**

As I said, it is in the Housing strategic framework consultation paper going out. It is a priority, along with ... the main priority initially is supply, getting more houses built, improving our stock and increasing our stock and working with social housing providers. If it turns out that key workers will come within social housing, also we need to be thinking of where would you put ... they cannot be mixed in, for argument's sake, a block of flats with other social housing providers if they are working with families are in that block as well. All those issues need to be thought through.

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

The point is the right one, obviously, which is you cannot hope to provide detailed housing plans for lots of different cohorts if you do not have the supply coming through, which is why we are working hard on getting the supply.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

How are you doing with the supply? What I hear on the ground, as it were, in St. Helier is there are a lot of people being decanted and a lot of refurbishment going on, but not a lot of new build. Have we increased the supply?

**The Minister for Housing:**

There is decanting, because we know that the States have given a bond to Andium to refurbish, and quite rightly, because the state of the housing, it needed updating. Yes, we have got housing needs going forward, but last week's decision does not help. It does not help regarding La Collette flats, so Andium will have to go back to the drawing board and we will have to rethink that, what we are going to do there.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

It is also the rezoned sites are not coming forward, it would seem, with any plans for development.

**The Minister for Housing:**

With the other rezoned sites of Samarès and De La Mare, yes, they are coming forward.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Okay, that is good.

**The Minister for Housing:**

I cannot remember the breakdown, but Ralph can tell me the breakdown. It is first-time buyers there, is it not?

**Principal Planner, Island Plan Review:**

No.

**The Minister for Housing:**

Affordable housing?

**Principal Planner, Island Plan Review:**

It is largely rental, so it is 80 per cent rental and 20 per cent affordable purchase, which is defined by income levels. But the Planning Department have put the development briefs out, which have now come back, and now I understand with both De La Mare and Samarès, negotiations are well under way in terms of owners and potential providers taking those units on in the future. We are just waiting for planning applications to come in. I think there is some fairly advanced planning on those sites.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Okay, that is good news.

**Principal Planner, Island Plan Review:**

Which is good news, yes.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Mr. Buchholz, you mentioned briefly before a number of units that the Health Department owns or leases and could be passed over. If you could give us that number.

**Principal Planner, Island Plan Review:**

If you just give me a few minutes, I will find that in a moment for you. This is taken from a report, which is the Ridge report, and in 2013 the number is 224.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

224?

**Principal Planner, Island Plan Review:**

Yes, and of which, if you want a breakdown of type, 28 per cent were bedsits; 23 per cent were flats; 16 per cent were a house; 20 per cent were rooms and 13 per cent were a room with an ensuite. That was in 2013, so the numbers might be slightly different today, but that was from the Ridge report in 2013.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Sorry, what percentage were houses?

**Principal Planner, Island Plan Review:**

16 per cent. This is on page 6 of the report.

**The Minister for Housing:**

I do not know if that included the trust at that time, because the trust houses now have moved over to J.P.H. (Jersey Property Holdings).

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes. Were those units that the department rented, do you know, because it seems a lot? Surely they could not have owned 224. Well, apart from the nurses' home, for example.

**The Minister for Housing:**

There is Westaway Court and there is also the St. Saviour's site up there. I am trying to think where else they are. I should know. There is the trust houses. I do not know whether the trust houses are included in that or not - probably are, because they had not gone over to J.P.H. by then - and other sites.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Would any of these, Minister, be rental properties?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I would have thought all of them would be rental.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

All of them?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I say that without ... I am assuming.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

What I mean is, for example, Westaway Court and the other properties you mentioned are owned by the public, but are there also properties that are leased by the Health Department in order to house their doctors and so on?

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

There is a small number.

**The Minister for Housing:**

You would have to ask the Health Department that and the Social Services.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes, of course we will in due course.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

It seems that selection of housing units is dominated by single rooms, single accommodation. Is that still the pattern for recruitment, that by and large we are recruiting single specialists or are we talking families?

**Principal Planner, Island Plan Review:**

That will be part of the housing needs survey. When we discuss the current and the future requirements of the staff, then obviously that is something we need to understand ourselves. We do not have that full picture ourselves yet, and that is a bit of work that we are engaging with Health on as we speak.

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

That is around size of households.

**Principal Planner, Island Plan Review:**

Yes, size of household. But you are right, what are they looking to retain?

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Do we know if Health have got a picture of what the recruitment pattern is?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I would expect so; they did so. Anecdotal evidence says that we are now growing our own, which is good. I think the first lot of 16 locally-trained nurses will be coming through the system probably next year or this year perhaps - it is either this year or next year - so that is a good step. But they

have done a whole lot of work, good work, to recruit nurses. But nurses now, not so many are going straight from school, where those days, as we said, not so ... it tends to be like a second career, and if you looking at employing specialist nurses especially, they tend to come with a family.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

That is right. That is what we are hearing from the employee representatives, that the demographic is changing.

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes, and quite rightly, because they are more experienced and that has implications in itself.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Apart from anecdotally, has a piece of research been done on that in the Health Department, do you know?

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

I am not aware, but what we are talking about is doing ... we feel the need, as a housing unit, to do a snapshot of staff in terms of household size, so we can get some distribution and match it to the composition of the portfolio and income so we can understand levels of support. That is what we are committed to doing for the end of the year. I do not know enough as to what the Health information is, but these things ebb and flow, so you need a snapshot at one time of household size.

**The Minister for Housing:**

Because it will change from day to day.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

It can change from day to day. There will be a trend discernible ...

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes, there will be trends, but it will change ...

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

... otherwise we would not be able to design anything.

**The Minister for Housing:**

But that is where, as Paul said, you need to start tracking that.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

But as far as you know, that work has not been done?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I am not saying that, so do not put words into my mouth there. I would have thought that a lot of work has been done regarding recruitment and retention.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

You can give us that document later with the latest ...

**The Minister for Housing:**

That is something you will have to ask Health and Social Services.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

The employee representatives have told us that when a nurse comes over with family they are often faced with a dilemma, because if they are seeking accommodation in the private sector, landlords will want a minimum of a year's lease, but their probation period is usually 6 months and so they are nervous about committing themselves to a year's lease and paying that deposit. Is there any solution or help that we, as a housing unit, or as Government, could give?

**The Minister for Housing:**

That is a jolly good question. It is the first time I have heard of it and it is something that I need to think about. If it is a problem, then we need to look at how we can resolve it.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

It has been identified as a problem in the evidence we have heard so far. I do not say it affects everybody, but perhaps you would take that on board and consider if there is something that can be done, because of course this ...

**The Minister for Housing:**

Perhaps that could be picked up in the housing needs survey, have a question asked there or whatever.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Because this might be a factor in affecting a decision to come to Jersey in the first place, I suppose. Minister, can I ask, are you aware of any contractors or property owners who have offered accommodation for key workers?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Not that I am aware of, no.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

No, okay. If somebody was to offer, for example, a hotel which is past its sell-by date, let us say, and they are seeking another use for it, is that an option that could be considered?

[10:00]

**The Minister for Housing:**

Any options should be considered. It is working through. My concern was that you just said "past its sell-by date." Will that mean significant investment, because if we are going to do something like that, you need to make sure that wherever the nurses going, nurses or any social workers or whatever, whoever, are going into good habitable homes.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes, of course we would agree.

**The Minister for Housing:**

I would ask the question, why would the hotelier want to get rid of this if it is not good for guests but it is good for nurses and I would not advocate that.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes. No, no, I do not mean to suggest they go into sub-standard accommodation at all, but perhaps the hotelier no longer wishes to spend the capital, would pass on the site, acknowledging that it is in need of extensive refurbishments. But you are not aware of such opportunities?

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

No. I am not saying we have not got a sustainable model, but I think if you have a sustainable model, then it opens up all sorts of opportunities, it gives you flexibility as to how you provide the accommodation, whether you rent, whether you acquire, whether you acquire and refurbish, whether you build. So I think the prerequisite, and that is part of the policy, is making sure there is a sustainable financial model for the financing of key workers, then it gives you those sorts of options. I am not aware of any offers that were made.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

What do you think is the response of the Health Department to the work you are doing?

**The Minister for Housing:**

In regard to this?

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

In regard to accommodation for its healthcare workers, yes.

**The Minister for Housing:**

I think it is very positive. We have had a couple of meetings with them and I know that work will continue, because they need to be involved with the housing needs survey, because they know what the nurses need. We need to come in with the expertise of understanding exactly their housing needs, a cohort of housing needs survey. It is working together to try and solve this issue.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes. That would be important, because at the moment if accommodation needs are managed through the Health Department, there is only one department the key worker has to deal with, but if the accommodation becomes the responsibility of another part of the States system, then we must not leave the people coming into the Island to work for us in a situation where they are dealing with the Health Department as their employer, but someone else as the accommodation provider or facilitator. What systems are you trying to put in place to ensure that the process is seamless for key workers coming in?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I think it is too early to say. It is understanding all the needs of that. I think Health and Social Services will always want to hang on to some accommodation for the locums, for the agencies or whatever, because Health and Social Services always need locums, so they need to be able to access that immediately. But as regarding any other relationship, you have a relationship with your employer and you have your relationship with your landlord. It needs to work and if we can achieve that, it will work.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Insofar as it concerns the accommodation that may stay with the Health Department for its locums, is there a role for Andium or any other body to manage that building or maintain it?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I think that is a question you need to ask Health and Social Services, because I know that they need to have immediate access to accommodation, because with locums, they could only be here for 2 or 3 days or they could be here longer, so they need to have access to that accommodation.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Okay, but in terms of looking after the building, would that still remain with the Health Department or ...

**The Minister for Housing:**

I think at this moment in time I would envisage that, but then saying that, everything is on the table. If we can find a workable solution which includes taking over and working with a policy and a procedure that allows that immediate flexibility, then it is worth discussing. But we need to do that survey, continue with that survey first.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Minister, can I perhaps ask you a broader question? As the Minister for Health for a long period, can you tell us what you think are the key factors that affect recruitment and retention of healthcare workers?

**The Minister for Housing:**

Over my years, I think the main one was housing, as I understood it, and the cost of living in Jersey, be it childcare or whatever. I know a lot of work was done. That is where the importance of growing your own, I think that has been very successful, but I know when the recruitment ... I am trying to think what they were called. The Education Department went out to the R.C.N. (Royal College of Nursing) and N.M.C. (Nursing and Midwifery Council) conferences looking at recruitment, doing retention. A lot of work was put in with potential employees, so that they understood exactly what they were coming to in Jersey, so therefore when they came ... but also, importantly, the opportunities that Jersey brings. But they came in with their eyes open, and to a certain extent it has been successful, because I think the recruitment rate is not as big as it used to be.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

What about retaining healthcare staff? Are there difficulties there perhaps because of either conditions of work or factors of living in Jersey?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I am not briefed. This is a year since I have been out. Because the retention rate, you will be able to get up-to-date figures from Health and Social Services and I think that level has dropped over the years.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

The policy in previous years - admittedly I think some time back now - was, where possible, to offer temporary essential employment and 3-year and 5-year contracts were routine, with the philosophy that you could train somebody up to take a role in that way. We certainly heard the other day about the trend is now that contracts are permanent contracts, we seem to have gone away from that 3-year or 5-year contract policy. Is that the case? Are we now doing permanent appointments when we are talking about essential employees, nurses et cetera and the spread of professionals?

**The Minister for Housing:**

You will have to get that information from Health and Social Services, because they are the employers, at the end of the day.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Somebody in this room?

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

Some of these are Minister for Health questions, some of these are more Chief Minister, because it is migration questions rather than ours. But in terms of migration policy or permissions, it is a combination of local recruitment and thinking about retention, more permanent contracts rather than short term, it is a combination of both, as opposed to - yes, you are right - the old style 3-year contract and that is that.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Is that a policy direction change that has been ...

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

As best I recall, it was 2007 or 2006 there was a move away from strict time limits of all contracts to more permanent contracts complemented by local recruitment. It is a migration policy rather than a housing policy, old J cats.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

You live and learn something every day.

**The Minister for Housing:**

Never too old to learn.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Nobody told me that at the time.

**The Minister for Housing:**

But personally, I see that as a very positive move, because if you train nurses up, if you bring experienced nurses up and do 3 years and then go, you have trained them in the way of the Jersey General Hospital and then after 3 years you say goodbye to them.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Then you are left looking for someone else.

**The Minister for Housing:**

Yes, left looking for somebody else at the end of it, yes.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

The other practical problem we found when we were discussing this the other day was that when people come and work for the General Hospital, they are usually on a 6-month contract and that sticks in the craw often of landlords who want a minimum of 12 months and they want to see some stability. People have to face that choice of: "Do I take a 12-month contract with the risk that I might not be here in 6 months"? Is that something that working with Andium or another body you might find a way around, because certainly 2 people have mentioned that to us. Has that been an issue?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I am not aware of that issue, but I am sure if it is an issue it will come out through that needs survey that we will do. I am not aware that it is an issue, but if you have had representations, it would be interesting to see.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes, just be aware that of course those who are already here would probably have overcome that issue or accepted it, but it may have been a factor which could have prevented some people coming to the Island.

**Principal Planner, Island Plan Review:**

I know that Health do exit surveys, exit interviews, so that is when you might get that type of information coming forward, and then more or less as well at that point probably than at other points.

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

But it is certainly the case that a social housing provider with a bigger portfolio might be less concerned than a private landlord in terms of somebody leaving, because they can find somebody else to take the unit. That is a bit more difficult for a private one.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

One last one, and I think it goes this direction: the other thing that some people have spoken to us about is the position of spouses of what we are calling essential employees, medical staff or professionals. Could you just confirm to me that those are dealt with on an individual basis or what is the policy?

**The Minister for Housing:**

I know it was not a big issue, but it was something that was flagged up, but I think with the change of law - this is wearing my other hat then - I think Health and Social Services at that time spoke to the Population Office and it was very positive.

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

But the broad conundrum was a nurse would come, many are married, many are single, but some are with partners, and if that partner cannot find a job then that is a difficulty for that nurse and that nurse might leave Jersey. Health approached us and asked if we would be sympathetic to requesting businesses to employ those partners, and given at the time the challenges of recruiting nurses we said yes, we would be sympathetic to those applications and we still are.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

That is still the case, is it?

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

That is still the case.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

It seems to me we are getting mixed messages about the ability of spouses or partners to take up accommodation which would otherwise be entitled to ... not accommodation, but employment available for the entitled to work status persons.

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

It is a combination of a business asking us ... it is an operational question, but a combination of a business asking us for permission, and as part of that, where they are the partner of a nurse that factor is taken into account. It is not the be all and end all, but it is certainly taken into account. If

we prove that the retention issues become less pronounced, it might be that policy should be reflected on, but that it still the current position.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

It is a question of having to make an individual application, is it?

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

Because it is the business under the controls we have to acquire the permission, so it is not the individual partner who comes to us, it is the business to say: "I want to employ somebody." The partner can approach us and we can confirm to the partner that if a business wishes to employ them that would be the treatment, but because it is the business that applies, it has to be that way around.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

On coming to the Island, would the partner receive just a registered status card at that stage?

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

Yes. You cannot legally change the status of the partner. All we can say is that a business wishes to employ that partner and take into account the fact that their partner is a nurse and we clearly want to recruit and retain nurses.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

But when you say "take into account" does that mean that the partner will be employed if he wishes to take up that job offer?

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

It is an individual decision on that business application, so when you get a business application, there is a whole range of things to think of. That is one of them.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes, but if the business wants to take ...

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

I say "take into account", it is persuasive.

[10:15]

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

It is persuasive?

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

Yes. It is not always a yes, always a no, each migration decision. A business application is assessed on its own merits, but it is persuasive, because there is a benefit to the Island in terms of the partner. When I say it is variable, it is each individual case is considered. But I think it has been sufficiently such that we, as the Population Office, have not heard this is an ongoing problem. It feels like it has helped.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

It may well be it is ...

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

Yes, and they are not that many either. We are talking a handful.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Has there been a time in the past when spouses or partners were not able to secure employment except in the registered sector?

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

This is the detail of the migration law, but essentially spouses acquire a status by virtue of their marriage, partners do not.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Partners do not?

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

Because by definition, what is a partner?

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

But I have seen some quite detailed procedures for ...

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

It is very difficult to adjudicate that administratively.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes, I know it is difficult, but I have seen some quite detailed procedures saying you have to prove you have been together for 3 years and the like, so if they can do that, are they treated in the same way as spouses?

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

I go back to what I said before, it is persuasive.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Persuasive?

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

I think the word might be “sympathetic” in the policy. I am not quite sure of the precise wording.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

A spouse would be different, a spouse would have ...

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

A spouse of an essential employee or an entitled person is entitled to work in their own right.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes, because they are a spouse.

**Director, Corporate Policy:**

Because they are a spouse.

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Presumably through the advent of discrimination law, that distinction will draw to a close at some stage, I would have thought. But finally from me, the one thing that has come across to me from the witnesses about recruitment of professionals in health is that the single biggest stumbling block is the sheer unaffordability of housing in Jersey, running in at between 9 and 11 times salary is just simply unaffordable, even for a couple. Is there any way that affordable purchase schemes operating through you would be made accessible to incoming professionals in medicine?

**The Minister for Housing:**

That may be something that we could down the line end up with, but let us go back to the beginning: we need to do that survey to understand exactly what the income levels are and the household budgets et cetera, and that work will start fairly soon.

**Deputy T.A. McDonald:**

Can you just remind me, the completion date was a little bit ambiguous, was it?

**The Minister for Housing:**

We hope to have it done by the end of January.

**Deputy T.A. McDonald:**

Really?

**The Minister for Housing:**

With a good wind. Quarter 1, quarter 1.

**Principal Planner, Island Plan Review:**

That is the survey to understand the needs, and that obviously that drives the work of the policy later.

**Deputy T.A. McDonald:**

That is right.

**The Minister for Housing:**

We said quarter 1, because I do not have a big unit, so it is quarter 1.

**Deputy T.A. McDonald:**

Yes, we understand.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

I think that is all the questions we have. Is there anything you wanted to mention to us, Minister?

**The Minister for Housing:**

No, I do not think so. Is there anything that we have ... no. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Thank you for assisting us and thank you to your team.

[10:19]