

**REPLY BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMITTEE *FOR* HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TO QUESTIONS
ASKED PURSUANT TO RULE 14 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE BY DEPUTY JANE STEPHENS**

Question 1

What was the date of the HSC Committee meeting when the modernisation of the abortion law first appeared as a substantive agenda item for discussion?

Answer

Initial concerns from local clinicians relating to the Abortion (Guernsey) Law, 1997 (the 'Law') were first brought to the current Committee *for* Health & Social Care for discussion at its meeting held on 14th February 2018.

Question 2

Please confirm the date when the policy paper was submitted for publication?

Answer

The Policy Letter entitled 'Modernisation of the Abortion (Guernsey) Law, 1997' was submitted to H.M Greffier for publication on 2nd March 2020.

Question 3

As referenced at 1.5 as, 'members of the public', in the policy letter,(P 2020/42), please advise if this reference refers to the same events as described at 1.14 , 'with members of the public', in the policy letter?

Answer

The reference to 'members of the public' in paragraph 1.5 of the Policy Letter is generally referring to the small group consultation described in paragraph 1.14 of the Policy Letter.

Question 4

Please list the criteria for identifying members of the public to receive invitations to attend the focus group meetings.

Answer

HSC did not invite specific individuals to attend the focus group discussions, nor were there specific criteria for identifying members of the public to take part. These were small open

sessions organised through workplaces, which were designed to provide an opportunity to explore, challenge and explain the conclusions that had been reached at that point through the extensive research and consultation with clinicians. The intention therefore was not on gaining quantitative data but rather qualitative discussion of the proposals.

A commitment was made to engage with these organisations on a confidential basis.

Question 5

How many invitations were offered directly by HSC to individual members of the public to attend focus events, and to *groups* of members of the public to attend the focus events, (excluding politicians, clinicians, employees of HSC, employees of SOG and statutory officials)?

Answer

HSC did not issue invitations directly to members of the public for the focus groups. Invitations were sent out at officer-level to organisations to enable workplaces to organise focus group discussions, some of which did not take place.

At the time at which the focus groups discussions took place, HSC was also arranging a separate event with members of the public, which was due to take place on 11th March 2020. This was determined to be a more appropriate forum by some of the organisations that were approached regarding a focus group discussion, but was regrettably postponed when the guest speaker's flight was cancelled due to inclement weather. The Committee was unable to re-arrange the event due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown restrictions enforced in the Bailiwick during the following months.

Question 6

Please confirm on what date each focus group session took place.

Answer

The focus group sessions were conducted on 13th and 14th February 2020.

Question 7

How many invitations were offered directly by HSC to *individual* members of the public to attend events, other than focus groups, and how many invitations were issued to *groups* of members of the public to attend events other than focus groups, (excluding politicians, clinicians, employees of HSC, employees of SOG and statutory officials)?

Answer

No other engagement events took place.

As above, the Committee had arranged for a public engagement event to take place on 11th March 2020 with a guest speaker from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, which was regrettably postponed as the guest speaker's flight was cancelled due to inclement weather. The Committee was unable to re-arrange the event due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown restrictions enforced in the Bailiwick during the following months.

No individual or group invitations were offered for this event, which was widely publicised and open to the whole community to attend.

Question 8

Were there any other face to face meetings with members of the public, in the period between the first listing of the matter as a substantive item on the HSC committee agenda, and the commencement of the period when members of the public were invited to submit views in June 2020?

Answer

Five preliminary meetings occurred at officer level with four representatives of organisations to ascertain if it would be possible to speak to small focus groups within their organisations.

The Committee had arranged a public event, which was initially postponed and then cancelled due to the pandemic. This was intended to be a presentation and explanation of the Committee's proposals - it was not a consultation event.

Question 9

In total how many members of the public (excluding politicians, clinicians, employees of HSC, employees of SOG and statutory officials) have HSC discussed their proposals with in face to face settings during the period of the development of the Modernisation of the Abortion Law proposals.

Answer

Officers discussed the proposals to modernise the Abortion Law with thirty members of the public (excluding representatives indicated in Question 8) through small focus group

sessions. The groups were purposefully kept small so as to allow for open discussion. HSC had no prior awareness of the viewpoints of the attendees before each session.

In addition to the formal consultation process, HSC Committee members also did their own research and had their own conversations with people who were affected by the current situation, or concerned by proposals to change it, as is normal in the development of States' policies which involve matters of conscience. This engagement can't be quantified, but will have informed each Committee member's approach to the proposals which were eventually brought to the States.

Question 10

Please confirm the date of the commencement of the period of invitation to members of the public to offer their views on the proposals at the beginning of June 2020 and the final date for submission of public views as advised by HSC.

Answer

On the 1st June 2020 the Committee *for* Health & Social Care invited members of the public who wished their views on the Abortion Law proposals to be formally recorded, to submit those views to the Committee. The final date for submission was 12th June 2020 and a summary of the feedback was published on 15th June 2020. This was in response to a desire to add structure to the public feedback which had been ongoing since the Committee first published its proposals; however, emails and calls received before 1st June 2020 were also read and considered by the Committee and States Members, in preparation for the debate.