4.17 Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier Central of the Minister for Housing regarding the Homelessness Cluster. (OQ.119/2026)

Following the Minister's statement to the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel on 22nd October 2026, that he would attend the next Homelessness Cluster meeting, will the Minister state if that meeting has taken place; and advise what actions, Ministerial responsibilities and delivery dates have been agreed to prevent and reduce homelessness?

Deputy M.R. Ferey of St. Saviour (The Minister for Housing):

I thank the Deputy for the question. The next meeting of the Homelessness Cluster is scheduled to take place this week, and I look forward to participating in that discussion. As this meeting has not yet taken place, no specific new actions have been agreed at this stage; this will happen on Friday. It is important to recognise that the cluster is a partnership of organisations involved in preventing and addressing homelessness, including government services, social housing providers and specialist support agencies. Preventing and reducing homelessness is therefore a shared responsibility. The quarterly homelessness report demonstrates both the pressures facing services and the important work being undertaken to support Islanders experiencing homelessness. They also show positive outcomes, with more than 40 people supported into long-term secure housing during the second quarter of 2026. My focus will be on working with Cluster members to strengthen prevention activity and ensure efficient pathways out of homelessness are there for those who require that support.

4.17.1 Deputy C.S. Alves:

As the Minister knows, I was Assistant Minister to the Minister for Housing in the last couple of years. I would like to ask the Minister if he is going to continue with the Homelessness Ministerial Group that was originally started by Deputy Labey and continued with Deputy Mézec in the last couple of years.

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

No, I have no plans to continue with the Homelessness Ministerial Group. I see my focus as being on working with the partners who support homeless people. I have already set up meetings with the providers, and that is how I plan to get underneath the issues and to support those organisations in any way that I can.

4.17.2 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

The previous Minister for Housing called homelessness legislation premature and wanted a phased approach. Does the Minister agree with that position or not, and why?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

I think I have got quite a lot of history on this because in my previous role I was involved in the very first Homelessness Cluster. It was felt that legislation in itself is not necessarily the answer. We have got really good support mechanisms in Jersey. We have got really good organisations who want to work together to support people to make sure they do not become homeless. We see from the last quarterly reports that the figures have dropped slightly, which is encouraging. My view at this present moment in time is that I will not be bringing forward legislation.

[12:00]

4.17.3 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

Without legal duty, what guarantees that an Islander who becomes homeless gets help? I will add, does the Minister not agree that, as homelessness is multi-faceted, should he not be working closely with other Ministers to ensure there is prevention rather than putting all the emphasis on charities to be helping Islanders to ensure they are not homeless?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

What we do have is a definition of homelessness and by defining it, that at least gets us to understand the scope of the problem. Part of what we do around Council of Ministers is look at that in the round. I do not

see a need at the moment to reinvigorate the group that was set up before. I think the work is best done by myself and the team working with the providers.

4.17.4 Deputy T.A. Coles of St. Helier South:

In the Environment, Housing and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel, the Minister acknowledged that homelessness in men is caused primarily by substance use and then women by domestic abuse. Both of these items are covered by different Ministerial portfolios. Is it then not better to have a Ministerial steering group on homelessness?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

As Ministers, we speak to each other. We raise concerns with each other, we work together. There are identified problems which we work together in the round to solve.

4.17.5 Deputy T.A. Coles:

If the Ministers work together having a co-ordinated meeting around a particular topic minuted so the public can understand what discussions had been held, would there not be a steering group?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

I still see the Cluster as being my main focus. and that is the way I intend to take this work forward.

4.17.6 Deputy C.S. Alves:

It is really disappointing to hear that the Minister will not be putting that Ministerial group back together again, which did include stakeholders as well. The Minister mentioned that it was a shared responsibility among everybody. Can the Minister advise on what basis did he make this decision? Has he spoken to stakeholders and the other Ministers involved before taking this decision?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

I am continuing to speak to stakeholders. As I have expressed earlier, I have that Cluster meeting this week. That is one of the things that I shall put to that Cluster meeting and the wider stakeholders to garner their opinion on the matter.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Can I just clarify something there, Sir?

The Bailiff:

Yes.

Deputy C.S. Alves:

Does that mean the final decision has not been made then; the Minister is taking up?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

I have decided to not reinvigorate that Ministerial group. If the Cluster members and the providers have a different view, then I will reassess that decision.