

2026.01.20

4.11 Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central of the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs regarding the rate of successful convictions for domestic abuse (OQ.10/2026):

Further to figures published within a recent Freedom of Information request will the Minister explain the reasons why the rate of successful convictions for domestic abuse has fallen over the past 5 years, despite a rise in recorded incidents over the same period, and advise what actions or improvements, if any, are being taken or considered to secure more convictions?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat of St. Helier North (The Minister for Justice and Home Affairs):

I thank the Deputy for the question. Over the past 5 years there has been an increase in crimes reported to the police in relation to domestic abuse. This is a positive. This means people now have the confidence to report these matters to the police. However, there has also been a rise in the number of victims who choose not to support a criminal prosecution. This can happen for many complex and often deeply personal reasons. When victims do not support a prosecution it relates in fewer cases being detected, charged and, ultimately, convicted. This has contributed to a declining overall conviction rate. The States of Jersey Police are not compliant about these figures. There is a clear need to address the gap between the number of crimes reported and the number that results in convictions. This responsibility does not solely lie with the States of Jersey Police, and they are committed to working with the Law Officers' Department to bring as many cases as possible to justice. In relation to strengthening, it will be noted that we have developed some legislation in relation to the Violence Against Women and Girls. A key development is included in the Draft Domestic Abuse (Jersey) Amendment Law, which proposes new measures to strengthen prosecutions for victims, even before a perpetrator is convicted. Currently Jersey does not allow for pre-conviction emergency barring orders. This means police cannot require a suspected perpetrator of domestic abuse to leave the victim's residence or prevent contact while investigation is ongoing. As a result, police have limited tools to safeguard victims when an offence has not yet resulted in conviction.

4.11.1 Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I thank the Minister for her answer. But one factor in putting off victims from continuing are potential long delays before getting to court, which is bad for both victims and accused. Can the Minister say whether there is any plan to try and prevent those long delays before a case comes to court?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

I appreciate that that can be an issue. I think what needs to happen is that once a victim has made their complaint and all the necessary work has been done, that these cases need to be expedited as quickly as possible. Obviously this is close working in relation to the Law Officers' Department and the police. I think everyone will be aware that more cases are coming to court, and this might be a matter that will need to be addressed in the future. Because, as the Deputy rightly says, there are delays in our court processes and that is a matter that needs to be looked at.

4.11.2 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade:

Following on from Deputy Curtis who made a point about one of the reasons why victims might be choosing not to pursue matters further to prosecution, has the Minister done any work to understand that point in more detail, understand those reasons in more detail? What specific steps is the Minister taking or other agencies taking, such as the police, that will encourage more victims to take part in the prosecution process?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Also, one of the elements of the recommendations in relation to the Violence Against Women and Girls was that of looking at the processes in relation to the L.O.D. (Law Officers' Department) and the police. That review of the court process is, ultimately, coming to conclusion and a vast piece of work has been done. Of course once that is actually provided and that information is available, then obviously that

can be looked at in closer detail. Hopefully, that will also help. But I think there is a lot of work that needs to be done in relation to victims as a whole, and I think the support of those victims is also critical. I think, as we have said previously, this is an ongoing piece of work that even after all of those recommendations under the Violence Against Women and Girls is completed, this is a matter that will need to be continued to be addressed in the future.

4.11.3 Deputy J. Renouf:

I thank the Minister for her response and note indeed the need for ongoing work. But I just would like to try and gain some clarity on whether the Minister is confident that we know the reasons why people are not pursuing these matters to prosecution.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

I think, as I said, these are very complex personal matters and I think sometimes it is difficult. Not all victims will want to continue with a prosecution. But what I think is very important is that those victims will initially report the matter to the police. Because once that matter has been reported to the police, that information is then available to the police moving forward. Obviously if a victim comes to the attention of the police again, then obviously that is valuable information. I think it does need further work. As I said, the police are not complacent with it. I think there are a lot of things that need to be looked at. I think once we have a clear indication in relation to some of the work under the Violence Against Women and Girls in relation to the complexity of the courts, because obviously that piece of work has spoken extensively to victims and the processes and how they feel those court processes and their dealings have been dealt with. I think once that information is available I am confident that we can move things forward. But also we need to continue to resource these areas because at present I would suggest that we do not.

4.11.4 Deputy C.D. Curtis:

While the understanding of the harm caused by domestic abuse has improved, that harm which includes long-term anxiety and mental health problems and trauma to children and the family, does the Minister think that there is still room for improved understanding among the police, the judiciary and the general public?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

I believe that there will always be a journey. I think that it will never conclude that we are at the end of the road in relation to domestic abuse of any nature. I think the learning from all of the information that is gathered along the way and the continual support, the continual need to develop staff and the continual need for learning and training, will carry on, in my view, for ever. Because until such time as we have a perfect society, this will always need significant attention.