

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF HOUSE OF KEYS (QUESTIONS)

Douglas, Tuesday, 12th March 2002
at 10.00 a.m.

Present:

The Speaker (the Hon J A Brown) (Castletown); Mr D M Anderson (Glenfaba); Hon A R Bell and Mr L I Singer (Ramsey); Mr R E Quine OBE (Ayre); Mr J D Q Cannan (Michael); Mrs H Hannan (Peel); Hon S C Rodan (Garff); Mr P Karran, Hon R K Corkill and Mr A J Earnshaw (Onchan); Mr G M Quayle (Middle); Messrs J R Houghton and R W Henderson (Douglas North); Hon D C Cretney and Mr A C Duggan (Douglas South); Hon R P Braidwood and Mrs B J Cannell (Douglas East); Hon J P Shimmin (Douglas West); Hon J Rimington, Mr Q B Gill and Hon Mrs P M Crowe (Rushen); with Mr M Cornwell-Kelly, Secretary of the House.

The Chaplain took the prayers.

Questions for Oral Answer

- | | |
|--|--------|
| 1. Young Persons in Care - Absconding - Liability for Damage (Mr Houghton) | KQ 101 |
| 2. Respiratory Illnesses - Most Prevalent Types - (Mr Henderson) | KQ 105 |
| 3. Respiratory Illnesses - DHSS Resources and Care (Mr Henderson) | KQ 106 |
| 4. Douglas Harbour Improvement Programme - Provision for Leisure Craft (Mr Houghton) | KQ 108 |
| 5. Young Persons in Care - Amnesty for Absconders (Mr Houghton - withdrawn) | |
| 6. Young Persons in Care - Stolen Vehicles Accidents (Mr Houghton) | KQ 108 |
| 7. Local Authority Housing - Earnings Ceilings for Eligibility (Mr Karran) | KQ 109 |
| 8. Local Authority Housing - Income Level as Acceptance Criterion (Mr Quayle) | KQ 109 |
| 9. Crowe EPH Ltd - Financial Collapse - Resumption of Inquiry (Mrs Cannell) | KQ 114 |

Questions for Written Answer

- | | |
|--|--------|
| 10. Ombudsman - Establishment of (Mr Quine) | KQ 114 |
| 11. Young Persons in Care - Absconders Reported to Police (Mr Houghton) | KQ 114 |
| 12. Young Persons in Care - Absconders from Establishments (Mr Houghton) | KQ 114 |
| 13. Vehicles Stolen - Numbers - Young Absconders (Mr Houghton) | KQ 115 |
-

**Young Persons in Care – Absconding –
Liability for Damage –
Question by Mr Houghton**

Question 1. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Houghton) to ask a member of the Department of Health and Social Security:

With regard to young persons residing in your department's care establishments:

- (1) *what is being done to prevent continual absconding on a daily basis; and*
- (2) *does your department accept liability for damage caused by young persons whilst in care?*

The Speaker: I call upon the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name, sir.

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan, member of the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mrs Hannan: Thank you, Vainstyr Loayreyder. I would like to take this opportunity to comment on the question of absconding, which in the Collins Dictionary is defined as 'to run away to avoid arrest or prosecution.' This gives a totally wrong picture of the service that is being provided in the residential units. Young people in care are being cared for and not subject to detention. In situations such as this, the department is acting merely *in loco parentis*. If our own young people went out of the home without permission or failed to return at the agreed time, we would not refer to them as having absconded.

Returning now to the question of preventing children leaving a residential unit without permission or, if given permission, for failing to come back on time, when this happens a policy is in place agreed between the police, the department and the care providers for informing the police of the young person being missing. Staff in the residential unit also initiate searches for that young person. I can confirm that the great majority of young people who are missing from residential homes and reported to the police as missing are returned by staff of the unit in which they live.

Recently, further meetings have taken place with the police, the department and providers to identify ways in which the procedures can be improved, and ways have been agreed to improve those procedures. Staff within the residential units have a very difficult job in dealing with some very difficult young people who are currently in the care of the department. If young people wish to leave the establishment without

permission, staff will at all times attempt to stop them doing so. The methods used are many and varied and depend upon the situation and the needs of that young person. Where, however, this fails and the young person is insistent that he or she is leaving the unit, staff can only use physical restraint if they believe that in leaving the premises the young person will be subject to harm or is likely to subject others to harm. This involves very difficult judgement by staff and involves knowledge of the young person and their intentions. To use physical restraint to stop someone from leaving a unit where there is no evidence that harm will happen could constitute an assault by the member of staff on the young person and could result in a member of staff being suspended from work. All staff are trained in the appropriate use of restraint using a method called 'therapeutic crisis intervention'. When it is appropriate, doors or windows will be locked; children who break the rules will have privileges withdrawn.

Every effort is made to prevent young people leaving the unit without permission but we have to remember that the residential units for young people are not prisons. Young people are in care generally because their parents are unable to cope with them. They often have emotional and behavioural problems and they need to be looked after in a caring environment. Again, I would repeat, they are not in prison. They are, after all, children. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which this Island, Man, is a signatory, contains principles which guide the overall operation of the services available for children.

The question also asks about liability of the department for damage caused by young persons whilst in care. In general terms the department does not accept liability for any such damage. Ultimately, of course, it would be a matter for the court to determine in the circumstances of any particular case the extent of the liability, if any, and to whom it rested. Thank you, Vainstyr Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Thank you, Mr Speaker. However, does the member not acknowledge that the present situation is so serious that emergency arrangements must be put in place right now in order to prevent those youngsters from their continual offending and to protect the public from harm, damage to property, the repeated theft of motor vehicles, to say the least?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan, member for the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mrs Hannan: No, I cannot accept the assertion made by the member for Douglas North. As I have

explained, the department and its agencies and the people looking after these young people do have to make a judgement as to whether they would be damaging themselves or seriously damaging anyone else. It really comes down to how we look after and how we take care of our children. It is not just children in care that take cars, it is not just children in care that are involved in acts of crime, and I think all the way through history there have been young people who have got into trouble with the law, so it is not safe to say that now is an exceptional circumstance. The people looking after our children have a very serious responsibility. They are accountable to the department and as I have mentioned there are certain things that can happen. We have a convention which we have signed to, we must protect the interests of the child, and as I have said before, many of the children that are in care have serious problems which government, through the Department of Health and Social Security, have to try to help them with, and it is not just helping them for today, it is helping society into the future and we are endeavouring to do that.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas South, Mr Duggan.

Mr Duggan: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Could I ask the member in charge, sir, regarding the police time taken up. There is a concern amongst the police force that these children, especially certain ones, keep absconding all the time, the same ones mainly, and it has taken considerable police time trying to track these youngsters down. (**Mr Houghton:** Hear, hear.) And what about the injured parties of these young fellows with the mischief they get up to?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan, member for the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mrs Hannan: I am not condoning children being absent without leave from these institutions but I would think that, in the interests of society as a whole, it is a valuable use of police time. We have this arrangement with the police through the department that children who are missing after a certain time will be reported as missing, and it is then for the police to take action, but not only the police; the people in the homes also go and look for these children and also the children will return by themselves. They are reported missing after not returning after about 30 or 40 minutes, so every child that is not back at the time that they should be . . . It is like the way we allow our children to go out, we have to allow our children to leave home to become independent and to gain some of these responsibilities of being able to come back at the right time, so when they have left the premises and they are not back at the time that they were told to get back at, they then will be reported as missing and action will be taken to bring them back.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell.

Mrs Cannell: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Would the hon. member for the department agree with me that when a young person is placed in care for whatever reason through a court order imposed by the court that order places a parental responsibility (**Mr Houghton:** Hear, hear.) on the department which would appear not to be acknowledged by the department? And further, would the hon. member agree with me that there is a balance to be struck here in terms of care? The hon. member talks of care, but surely, if you are going to be a responsible parent, there needs to be a balance of care and discipline and that anything less could be perceived at neglectful.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan, member of the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mrs Hannan: I think when it comes to discipline, Vainstyr Loayreyder, many of these children have received excessive discipline within their home situation. We have got these children into care for the simple reason that they have suffered in many areas of their life and we are trying to deal with these difficulties. In normal circumstances parents will strike this balance, but we are trying to deal with young people that have not received the care that some people would generally expect parents to give to their children. If the court order says that a child has to be securely kept within whatever, then yes, within our ability we will and, as members know, we are actually building a secure unit - not that that is necessarily the total answer to problems we have with the issues such as we are talking about today, which is not returning back at the particular time, and that is why they are deemed to be absent and reported to the police as being absent but we do have a responsibility, we are taking that responsibility seriously, as are the police. We are working with the police; it is an agreed arrangement we have with the police that children will be reported and at times they will be announced as being missing and their names will be released for that reason, because we are concerned about their safety and about them being returned.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker. The hon. member previously alluded to the fact that, of course, it is not just children in care that commit serious offences and she is quite right in that. But how does she account for as many as 30 vehicles have been taken without the owner's consent since September by children in care and some of those vehicles are being used as a brand new all time thrill to those absconders, which is to ram police vehicles in those stolen

vehicles? And does she also not contend that many - in fact, virtually all, but certainly many - of those who go into care homes, go in those homes without any criminal convictions but they are not in there for a very long period of time before they have got an extremely long list of convictions to their name and they have offended whilst they have been in care? What are the hon. member's comments to those two points, sir?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan, member for the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mrs Hannan: I think the member for Douglas North is generalising. This is not a fact that children in care start offending and I refute that totally. (*Mr Houghton interjecting*) There are some young people who do take vehicles, but again, I repeat, not just the children that are in care. Other children do as well; other adults take vehicles and drive them at speed.

Mr Houghton: But why should these be allowed to?

The Speaker: Hon. member, please!

Mrs Hannan: There is the law and I think we all, who have children, bring them up to the extent that we hope that, when they are by themselves, they are responsible human beings. In some instances we fail even when we do everything that you might be told is correct with bringing a child up. Some of these children, I go back to the fact, are seriously damaged children, they have offended before they come into care, the parents no longer cope with them and they hand them over to the department for the department to look after with the care, and with a great many young people we are extremely successful with. We give them a firm base, we give them all the encouragement that is necessary and we have had commendations. Only the other day the minister picked up a young boy who explained to her how grateful he was to the department for the care that the department had given him and to take no notice of the points that are being raised in some areas with regard to care. (**Mr Henderson:** Hear, hear.) So there are a lot of areas there which I think the member for Douglas is generalising in. It is not a situation that the care system has so many problems and so many young people that it creates problems for. I would refute that. I would say that we are dealing in a difficult area but we are dealing with it extremely well.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loareyder, would the member not agree that maybe the time has come for this House to look at a legislative package of measures

in order that we deal with the issue of children in general without being just in care, and would she not actually agree that the situation is, as I see in my own constituency, children of 11, 12, 13 onwards out at night to midnight, sometimes in the early hours, and maybe what we should be saying is that there should be legislation in order that police have the authority to bring children back to their homes if they are out wandering at night, not just singling out the ones that are in care, but I think it is not just an isolated case and would the member not agree that more likely in her own constituency these children should not be out and it shows a lack of parenting skills in my opinion?

Mr Houghton: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan, member for the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mrs Hannan: I think members might forget that there is the Chief Minister's strategy on young people that is meeting. It is a government body looking at various issues and one of the issues mentioned by the member for Onchan could possibly cover that particular area. I do not think it is for the Department of Health and Social Security to be involved with making sure that children are at home especially when they are under the care of their parents.

The member also suggests there should be legislation. We have only just debated legislation in the previous House, the Children and Young Persons Act, which is now coming along for its appointed day order, but I suggest that the member refers it to either a committee of the House or the Chief Minister's policy strategy on young people.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Rushen, Mr Gill.

Mr Gill: Thank you, Vainstyr Loareyder. I am conscious that this question relates to liability, i.e. apportioning blame remedy, but I am also conscious that there are further questions tabled by the hon. member for Douglas North relating to alleged misbehaviour from a small number of people particularly in relation to young people who are in care. I also note from speaking with the hon. member for Douglas North that he has a genuine concern to address these problems, as I am sure we all do, and of course, I am supporting this. However, as the hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan, so rightly pointed out, the care agencies and indeed all statutory and voluntary agencies working in this field have a very difficult task.

The Speaker: Hon. member, it is a question you are going to ask, please, and not a statement.

Mr Gill: It is a question, and the question is, could the hon. member for Peel please confirm that in

all dealings we will all try to be positive and constructive, and rather than just asking questions to point out failings in services, we will try to look for positive remedies?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan, member of the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mrs Hannan: Thank you, Vainstyr Loayreyder. Yes, I would agree with that. I think we do need to be positive and I think to be negative the whole of the time about young people does not actually help them. As I have said before, we are working with children that have got difficulties and have not experienced what we would expect young people to experience, and therefore I think, to be negative about them when they have these difficulties which we are helping them get over, whether that is through court, whether it is through a voluntary order, a voluntary arrangement with parents or whatever, we are assisting them, and I would have thought the member for North Douglas would have been happy that we are trying to assist these young people so we do not have long-term offenders. Thank you, Vainstyr Loayreyder.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The hon. member for Rushen makes a valuable point about positive remedies, which is exactly what the point is today. But can the hon. member for the department explain whether she is indeed alarmed or otherwise about the latest goings-on with this circumstance and what are *her* positive remedies? What proposals does she have to remedy this very serious matter, sir.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan, member for the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mrs Hannan: I am not sure what this very serious matter is that the member is talking about.

Mr Houghton: Latest events.

Mrs Hannan: Latest events could be anything from –

Mr Houghton: Stealing cars.

The Speaker: Hon. member, please! Mrs Hannan has the floor.

Mrs Hannan: Vainstyr Loayreyder, we have difficulties within a whole range of areas that we have to deal with. The response that I have given this morning is a positive response and explaining the workings of the department with regard to children in

our care. We are extremely positive in the workings of the department working with young people trying to improve the situation for them. I think the member for Douglas North is suggesting something like locking everybody up who is in care and, as I have explained, we are working with young people and we are not retaining them in a prison-like situation. I think the member for Douglas North is suggesting that all children in care are going out stealing cars and all the rest of it, ramming police cars, when that is not the case. I think the issue that Mr Houghton has mentioned is that the person who was driving this car was not actually in care of the department, and so what he is suggesting is completely wrong. The full force of the law will be brought to bear with regard to what has happened in recent times, and that is not a responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Security. What is a responsibility is the law enforcement and that is down to the police. The department works closely with the police and the department is not shying away from its responsibilities with regard to young people, but we have to try to improve the situation for them, not make it worse and not continue to make it worse for these young people, and I would hope that members will support the department in that.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell.

Mrs Cannell: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is my final supplementary, sir. Can the hon. member for the department clarify, for the sake of hon. members here today, why the department's figures on those young people who have absconded from September 2001 to February 2002 totals 316 when the Department of Home Affairs have recorded 252 having been reported as having absconded, for their purposes? Why is there a variation in the figures?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan, member for the department of Health and Social Security.

Mrs Hannan: Yes, we have been quite open with our figures, Vainstyr Loayreyder, because every report of a child missing is recorded and some of these are not actually children in care, but the inquiry would have come to one of the centres had this person been at the centre, and if they had been at the centre, they would then have been reported to the police as not returning home, so this is why they would be recorded by these agencies as being missing or being reported by these centres but not actually being recorded by the police as being absent from these centres. So that is where the difference is in these figures. We could have actually changed these figures too so that they actually matched up with the police figures, but these are our figures and we are not hiding behind these figures at all. Thank you, Vainstyr Loayreyder.

**Respiratory Illnesses –
Most Prevalent Types –
Question by Mr Henderson**

Question 2. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Henderson) to ask a Member of the Department of Health and Social Security -

- (1) *Would you agree that respiratory disease is now the UK's biggest killer; and*
- (2) *can you indicate that types of respiratory illnesses are present in the Isle of Man, and which appear to be the ten most prevalent?*

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name.

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, a member of the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Looking to the first part of the question, I can confirm the most recent data available in relation to the United Kingdom was for 1999 which, on the basis of international classification used, indicated that the principal cause of disease related deaths was cancer, followed by coronary conditions and then respiratory diseases.

Turning to the second part of the question, I am afraid the basis of the hon. member's question is somewhat simplistic and does not reflect the complex nature of the issues which would enable me to provide a meaningful and accurate response. Whilst the department is able to provide mortality data this does not reliably reflect disease prevalence as some diseases are more lethal than others. For example, chronic conditions such as obstructive airways disease and asthma will be more prevalent than conditions such as lung cancer, for which survival rates of are comparatively poor. However, in an attempt to be helpful, I can advise the hon. member that of the 120 recorded deaths in the Isle of Man from respiratory disease in the year 2000, approximately three-quarters were due to pneumonia, chronic bronchitis and emphysema, asthma and influenza.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Would the hon. member agree with me that, far be it from being simplistic, this was quite an easy undertaking for his department to present to this House this morning? Could he also agree with me that the 120 deaths that he indicated were due to other issues than chronic

obstructive airways disease and that the fact is that they were probably exasperated exacerbated by the same? And further to that, would he agree with me that there does seem to be a high instance on the Isle of Man of chronic obstructive airway disease or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, a member of the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr Anderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The department's view is that it is too simplistic to break it down in that way and the evidence we have and the figures that I provided for the hon. member are for latest year we have up-to-date figures on. Deaths in the UK were likely to be higher for cancer, followed by asthmatic heart disease and then respiratory disease, but it does not actually give us a full picture of the situation in the Isle of Man. As I stated, we have only the mortality data to go on. Obviously this can only be broken down to 120 and from that breakdown it is very difficult to ascertain exactly what element is in relation to which area, but the department will have more up-to-date figures hopefully in the near future of the UK for 2001, and hopefully that will give us a little bit more guidance.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Is the hon. member aware that some medical and nursing journals in the UK are now publishing their facts and findings that in fact respiratory disease is the biggest killer in the UK? Is he aware of that and is he aware that his own department is undertaking, and has been undertaking for some considerable time, longitudinal epidemiological studies into disease trends for this Island which would illustrate quite clearly beyond any manner of doubt what I am going on about this morning and that that information is easily retrievable; it is on record now?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, a member of the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr Anderson: The figures that the department has obtained are for the NHS and the journals that the hon. member is referring to – I do not know what up-to-date year -

Mr Henderson: For the year 2002.

Mr Anderson: Well, we have not got those figures and 2002 - I am sure, I will be very surprised if the NHS has got an overall picture on 2002 when we have only just started it. The journal that the hon. member is holding up is an article in this year's journal

but I am asking . . . and maybe I should not be asking the hon. member, but obviously it relates to another year, not 2002.

Mrs Crowe: Absolutely.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Ramsey, Mr Singer.

Mr Singer: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can I ask the hon. member for the Department of Health: has the department a figure for the number of asthmatics who are living on the Island?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, a member of the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr Anderson: Not as far as I am aware, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan.

Mrs Hannan: Thank you, Vainstyr Loayreyder. I wonder if the member for health would look at the number of people smoking with regard to respiratory diseases? That has not been mentioned.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, a member of the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr Anderson: Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker. This is a very important part of this disease problem and actually I will be covering it in the next answer for the hon. member for North Douglas.

**Respiratory Illnesses –
DHSS Resources and Care –
Question by Mr Henderson**

Question 3. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Henderson) to ask a Member of the Department of Health and Social Security -

What is your department doing -

- (1) to determine the health care needs of the community in relation to respiratory illness;*
- (2) future projections of respiratory illness;*
- (3) what resources are being given over this problem area; and*
- (4) what is likely to be required for the future?*

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, a member of the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr Anderson: Mr Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. In relation to part (1) I can confirm that a comprehensive strategy for health is being developed by the Director of Public Health. This work will assess, as far as possible, the health status of the Island's population and its health care needs in relation not only to respiratory illness but all the major disease groupings.

As regards the second part of the question, I have to say that, given our limited size, the Island could not justify the additional resources that would be necessary to undertake resources into a specific instance of illness such as respiratory disease. In this respect we will always be guided in general terms by the trends observed elsewhere, particularly adjacent jurisdictions.

Turning to existing resources I can first advise that the hospital service responsibility for the management of respiratory and associated conditions rests with the medical directorate. In particular, the hospital has established a cardiorespiratory department incorporating a pulmonary function laboratory to assess and meet the needs of patients presenting with cardiorespiratory conditions. This service is supported by a visiting consultant in cardiothoracic medicine. In addition, one of the consultant physicians has a special interest in chest medicine under which, and in conjunction with community staff, the management of respiratory conditions is organised. This includes a TB contact tracing service and regular BCG adult clinics backed up through the availability of designated in-patient accommodation. The hon. member will also be aware the department has recently reintroduced a school BCG vaccination programme.

Although a significant investment has been made in the clinical aspects of disease management, the department is committed to developing a health promotion strategy to educate the population over, for example, the dangers of smoking. In connection with this, the department officers are working with the Chief Minister's drug and alcohol group in developing a comprehensive tobacco strategy which is nearing completion, although implementation will depend upon the availability of adequate funding. This is a serious health concern and I am sure members will support the no smoking day initiative tomorrow.

Finally, Mr Speaker, in relation to the last part of the question, it is difficult to anticipate future demands until a formal needs assessment is carried out under the department's health strategy, which is currently being developed by the Director of Public Health.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Obviously I welcome the input into BCG et cetera for our schoolchildren that has been reintroduced but, having said that, would the hon. member of the Department of Health agree with me that there are other serious respiratory diseases in the Island which seem to have a higher incidence than in some parts of the UK such as emphysema and asthma, and would he agree with me that these are at such a point now that in fact it would warrant a dedicated consultant who has trained in the speciality? I would be grateful that we had somebody with an interest but does he not think now the time has come to actually have somebody who has the training and specialist certificates to back up the care that should be given? Can he confirm that the clinic which he speaks of is known as 'The Breathing Clinic', and that we could do with a bit better and to take cognisance of the results that they already hold on file?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, a member of the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr Anderson: I cannot confirm in relation to other parts of the UK; I have not that information that we are any worse than any other specific part in the United Kingdom.

Moving on to the consultants and the point that the hon. member makes that we have a part-time consultant visiting from the UK as well as, of course, our consultant with a special interest in this area, I think in the future it will be difficult to actually attract somebody on a multi-skill basis and I am sure that in the future we will have a dedicated consultant when that comes up for renewal.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell.

Mrs Cannell: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Would the hon. member agree with me that when he says that the Director of Public Health is going to conduct a comprehensive study to determine the health needs of the community in relation to respiratory illness, it will also cover those folk who do not smoke cigarettes but do suffer from fumes, from congestion caused by excessive traffic in the Isle of Man, the burning of fossil fuels and, particularly important, for the impending incinerator, which will burn all?

Mrs Crowe: No worse than coal fires!

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, a member for the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr Anderson: I am sure the health strategy will be comprehensive and will look at all aspects of impact on life in the Island.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Ramsey, Mr Singer.

Mr Singer: Could I ask the hon. member: would he confirm that the department policy is for preventative treatment rather than actual treatment itself and that the number of people with respiratory diseases and in particular, asthma on the Island is several thousand ranging from small infants to old people? Would he also like to comment on the fact that his department cannot hide behind the excuse that we have a person who has a special interest in a particular disease, because a person with a special interest has no qualifications in that disease, is not recognised as a consultant and that we cannot hide behind that guise? Could he confirm that to me also and can he also repeat: did he say that after this review we were going to be employing a respiratory and asthma consultant?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, a member of the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr Anderson: I did indicate in a previous supplementary answer to a question, Mr Speaker, that in the future I am sure there will be a dedicated consultant in the respiratory area. At the moment I can confirm that we have a visiting specialist who comes quite regularly to the Island as well as having a consultant that has a major interest in this area, but I have indicated that in the future it will be very likely that we will have a dedicated respiratory consultant.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Henderson.

Mr Henderson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I wholeheartedly welcome the announcement of the possibility in the future of a dedicated consultant to deal with respiratory problems on this Island, but can the hon. member give this House this morning an assurance that, whilst he is going to have this study undertaken by the Director of Health Promotion et cetera the department are already in the process of gathering information in another section of its own self with epidemiological studies which would give him the lead information which he seeking now to institute another review?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Glenfaba, Mr Anderson, a member of the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr Anderson: In answer to the hon. member's question, all information within the department's remit will be incorporated into the health strategy.

**Douglas Harbour
Improvement Programme –
Provision for Leisure Craft –
Question by Mr Houghton**

Question 4. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Houghton) to ask the Minister for Transport:

What provision has been made for owners of leisure craft to park their vehicles in the vicinity of Douglas Harbour subsequent to the harbour improvement programme?

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas West, Mr Shimmin, Minister for Transport.

Mr Shimmin: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Public pay-and-display car parking is currently available at the circus beach marshalling area adjacent to the Sea Terminal, the Coffee Palace and market berths, North Quay, the ex-bus station site in Lord Street and the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company site, Parade Street. On-street disk parking is also available on the north side of the North Quay Bridge Road and South Quay. A significant aspect of the South Quay Highway Improvement Scheme was the creation of the river bridge car park, which in the very near future will contribute a further 60 pay-and-display car parking spaces. The order that governs this car park contains provision for reduced fees to apply at the weekend and after 6 p.m. on other days, when it is envisaged that most boat-owners will make use of this facility. Further pay-and-display car parking will also be created in the near future on the Battery Pier approach road adjacent to the Fort Anne slipway and also at the Battery Pier. These areas will have similar provision in their orders for reduced fees for evenings and weekends.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am very grateful for the hon. member's answer today, sir.

**Young Persons in Care -
Stolen Vehicles Accidents –
Question by Mr Houghton**

Question 6. The hon. member for Douglas North (Mr Houghton) to ask the Minister for Home Affairs:

Since September 2001 to date -

(1) how many young people in care have been involved in road traffic accidents where vehicles taken without the owner's consent have been involved in collisions with marked Police vehicles; and

(2) on each occasion how many absconders were being carried in each vehicle?

The Speaker: Hon. members, question 5 has been withdrawn by the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton, therefore we move onto question 6. I call on the hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas East, Mr Braidwood, Minister for Home Affairs.

Mr Braidwood: Thank you, Mr Speaker. There have been three collisions involving marked police vehicles and children in care in vehicles that were taken without the owners' consent. On 19th September 2001, an accident occurred at Marown involving two children who were in care. On 12th October 2001, near Kerrowmoar, an accident occurred involving two juveniles in care, the driver being the person who was a passenger in the incident on the 19th September 2001. On 24th February 2002, an accident occurred in Baldrine when five juveniles were involved. The driver was also the driver in the accident that occurred on 19th September 2001.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Does the hon. minister not agree with me that absconders from care establishments and their behaviour have grown out of all proportions (A Member: Hear, hear.) and are stretching police resources to the limit, and vehicles that are taken without the owners' consent by these youngsters are a potential for future tragedy? Can the hon. minister confirm that this apparently new and developing thrill of ramming police vehicles whilst driving stolen vehicles must be ceased and how would he propose that can be possible, sir?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas East, Mr Braidwood, Minister for Home Affairs.

Mr Braidwood: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Yes, I can confirm that police are dismayed with the number of absconders. The police think that one third of the operational time of B division is taken in looking for the absconders.

In answer to the second part on the ramming of police vehicles, the only way we can be able to stop this is if the people in care were not able to abscond.

Two Members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan.

Mrs Hannan: Thank you, Vainstyr Loayreyder. Would the Minister for Home Affairs accept that people are only absconders when they are away from prison and not away from care?

A Member: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas East, Mr Braidwood, Minister for Home Affairs.

Mr Braidwood: Mr Speaker, I think we are only talking about children in care and not those who are from prison.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas North, Mr Houghton.

Mr Houghton: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the hon. minister for his previous positive answers in this particular situation, but can the hon. minister confirm in his answer that this is stretching police resources and a third of their time, which is being spent on dealing with absconders from care homes who should be within supervised care (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) at £3,000 per week per person? Would he not further agree that the third of time that is being wasted by police officers could be put to better use elsewhere, sir?

A Member: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas East, Mr Braidwood, Minister for Home Affairs.

Mr Braidwood: Mr Speaker, I can confirm that the young offenders are those notified to the police by the care homes and, yes, I would agree that police time could be better utilised.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas South, Mr Cretney.

Mr Cretney: Could I ask the minister: does he share my concern that it is not only young people who are in care who are involved in this situation but that there is one particularly young person who, on multiple occasions, has taken cars and has been involved in accidents, sadly? He is not in care and his parents would be happier if there was some more supervision of him because he obviously has a problem.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas East, Mr Braidwood, Minister for Home Affairs.

Mr Braidwood: Yes, I can confirm, Mr Speaker, that juveniles who take cars are not all in care. I can say that the person or the individual who was involved in the three incidents I have quoted initially was charged with dangerous driving and driving with no insurance and on 7th March, in the Magistrates Court, was sentenced to 24 weeks' youth custody.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan.

Mrs Hannan: Thank you, Vainstyr Loayreyder. Could the Minister for Home Affairs confirm that in each of these cases that he has mentioned – 19th September, 20th October and 24th February – the driver of each of these vehicles, though different people, was in care at that time?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas East, Mr Braidwood, Minister for Home Affairs.

Mr Braidwood: Mr Speaker, from the information that has been given to me I have said previously that each time the child and the juveniles involved in the accidents were in care.

The Speaker: Hon. members, questions 7 and 8 are on the same subject and I have therefore advised the minister that they will be taken as one, as I have advised the hon. members.

Local Authority Housing – Earnings Ceiling for Eligibility – Questions by Mr Karran and Mr Quayle

Question 7. The hon. member for Onchan (Mr Karran) to ask the Minister for Local Government and the Environment -

What were the reasons why a £22,000 ceiling of combined earnings was selected as the level to disbar couples from applying for a home from Local Authority housing?

The Speaker: I first call upon the hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

Mr Karran: I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name.

Question 8. The hon. member for Middle (Mr Quayle) to ask the Minister for Local Government and the Environment -

Are you satisfied that within the Housing List acceptance criteria, the maximum gross income of applicant(s) is correctly set at £22,000 and, is so, could you outline the reasons why this amount is adjusted to be satisfactory?

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for Middle, Mr Quayle.

Mr Quayle: Mr Speaker, I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name.

The Speaker: I call on the hon. member for Rushen, Mrs Crowe, Minister for Local Government and the Environment.

Mrs Crowe: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the hon. members for this question and it also gives me an opportunity to answer the hon. colleague for South Douglas, Mr Cretney, who had already written to me on exactly the same topic. The Department of Local Government and the Environment has a statutory responsibility for the formation of housing policy on the Island. The policy of the department in respect of public sector housing for rent is to ensure the provision of such housing for those who cannot afford to rent or purchase in the private sector. The department is required, in accordance with the resolution of Tynwald in October 1999, to ensure that each of the Island's housing authorities operates a uniform basis for acceptance onto housing waiting lists. At a meeting of the housing consultative committee in December 2000 the department presented draft proposals for a uniform acceptance criteria for discussion by the housing authorities. An upper income limit was proposed to ensure that public sector housing would only be allocated to those people who could not afford to rent or purchase properties in the private sector. There was also discussion about whether the upper income limit should relate to the house purchase assistance scheme and whether income tax should be gross or net after tax.

The joint gross income figure was initially set at £18,000 per annum, which is the level at which an applicant was eligible for the maximum grant of £16,500 towards the purchase of a property under the department's House Purchase Assistance Scheme. It was also decided that an assessment of the applicants income is more readily determined by the applicant providing recent pay slips or other proofs of income as this information is easy to obtain and less of an intrusion of privacy.

The views of hon. members were then sought, after which the figure was amended to £22,000. This was the upper limit for the House Purchase Assistance Scheme eligibility criteria. After further discussion with the authorities, the final draft was agreed and approved by the Council of Ministers in January.

Mr Speaker, hon. members will be only too aware of the demands in the housing sector, and I am sure

they would agree with me when I say that subsidised public sector housing should be directed at those who are in the greatest need. The setting of an income limit is not an exact science, but I think hon. members would agree that a limit does have to be set at a level where it would be reasonable to expect a person whose earnings exceeded to afford alternative accommodation in the private sector. The figure of £22,000 was calculated on the basis that a person could obtain a mortgage in the region of £80,000 and, with some savings and grant support, would be able to purchase under the House Purchase Assistance Scheme.

Now, this currently being reviewed and the income level will reflect changes for inflation et cetera. As part of this review we are considering an additional scheme of support to help people on average to lower incomes to bridge the gap between what they can afford to borrow and what properties actually cost to purchase, which is why I accept that our previous limit of £85,000 needs to be reviewed, and I hope to be able to make an announcement very shortly about the figures that we have been looking at.

At the time I will be happy to propose a higher upper income limit for inclusion on public sector waiting lists but one which still ties in with the House Purchase Assistance Scheme.

In accordance with the wishes of hon. members, a common approach has now been implemented to provide consistency across all housing authorities and to help those who are in most need. The department will continue to consult regularly with the housing authorities and monitor the implementation of the system and I will be happy to consider making any appropriate changes, including a change to the upper income limit. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, allowing that you are fortunate enough to get 100 per cent mortgage on £22,000, four times the salary is £88,000, where are decent houses for families to bring kids up for £88,000? Can she show us anywhere where she can get us these houses apart from the few token ones that are being done by her department? Would the minister also not agree that people outside this House are tired of seeing the previous gerrymandering that was done to housing waiting lists and will see this as yet another cynical attempt to cut the real housing crisis down by throwing genuine people to the wolves in the private sector, and will she, as a matter of urgency, bring it up to recognise the true market price of a decent home at the present time which must mean a mortgage of about £120,000 to £140,000, and will she review it up by at least £10,000 for joint income?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Rushen, Mrs Crowe, Minister for Local Government and the Environment.

Mrs Crowe: I think I answered most of those points, actually, in the lengthy reply I gave to the question. However, I do resent the term 'a few token houses'. The department is doing the best it can at this time –

Mr Karran: I am not denying it.

Mrs Crowe: - to provide affordable housing. (*Mr Karran interjecting*) That is my remit within the department and I am working every hour trying to achieve that. So I resent 'a few token houses'. They may be 'a few token houses' to you but to the 14 first-time buyers in the Laxey and Lonan area, I am sure they will be delightful homes. (*Mr Karran interjecting*)

The Speaker: Hon. member, please!

Mrs Crowe: Hon. members of this House asked for a common criterion for all local housing authorities. That is what has been provided. Now, the income levels may need to be reviewed. I did say in the answer it is not an exact science. All these things may need to be adjusted, and I have just said to you it will be adjusted in line with the House Assistance Purchase Scheme.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Middle, Mr Quayle.

Mr Quayle: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the hon. Minister for the Department of Local Government for her earlier replies, but would she agree with me that the following would be worthy of consideration: that a single person earning up to £18,000 gross and joint applicants who have a gross income of £22,000 which is based on the higher salary earner and, for the purpose of acceptance, one third of the net income of the second applicant? This calculation is based on the House Purchase Assistance Scheme and would the hon. minister therefore agree that if it is acceptable for calculating the income for the house purchase scheme, then it may be practical to apply this in regards to the housing authority lists?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Rushen, Mrs Crowe, Minister for Local Government and the Environment.

Mrs Crowe: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I thank the hon. member for that question and indeed that is exactly the way that we are reviewing the system at the present time, so hopefully I will be able to make an announcement in line with what the hon. member was suggesting.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas South, Mr Cretney.

Mr Cretney: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Could I ask the minister, could she confirm that she referred to public authority housing as subsidised housing and that government has rightly decided that not only public authority housing but also sheltered housing and first-time buyers' housing, because of the importance of housing, should be subsidised?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Rushen, Mrs Crowe, Minister for Local Government and the Environment.

Mrs Crowe: Yes, indeed, I can confirm that and as the hon. member is aware, sheltered housing is also subsidised and first-time buyer housing, as I say, grant aid of up to £16,500 at this present time to help young people be able to afford a home.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, would the minister not also agree that we are all subsidised who have a mortgage and improvement schemes, and would she agree that once again we see the right-wing bigotry that is coming out as far as council houses are concerned from the administration? Would she also tell this hon. House is she intending to throw off the people who have been waiting eagerly for a house on the waiting list and who are now over the £22,000 combined earnings scale? Are they going to be thrown off the wolves like the rest of them that come along after this date? And will the minister tell this hon. House that she will bring up the level to at least £30,000 within the next month in order to recognise you cannot get a decent home for under £120,000 without the tokenism that her department . . . long overdue and well appreciated, but the fact is that 14 houses are nothing compared to the real problem, the social horror that this House has seen in the housing crisis? (*Mr Cretney interjecting*) I would ask the minister - a time limit, will she now bring it back at £30,000 at the minimum as far as the housing list is concerned?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Rushen, Mrs Crowe, Minister for Local Government and the Environment.

Mrs Crowe: Mr Speaker, I will not be bullied into making an announcement about what the common criterion will be without full consultation having taken place with local authorities in the way we normally operate. This House asked for a common criterion. You either have one or you do not. Some people will be excluded from the list. There is discretion with the local authorities (**Mr Karran:** Rubbish!) if there is need. There is discretion – read the common criterion, my hon. friend.

Mr Karran: I have got it in front of me here.

Mrs Crowe: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan.

Mrs Hannan: Thank you, Vainstyr Loayreyder. Would the minister not agree with me that it is much easier to purchase a house in some six to eight weeks than to go onto a local authority housing list for some four-plus years, and therefore would she try to make it easier for people to purchase but, not only easier for people to purchase but also to purchase, reasonably-sized family houses? (**A Member:** Hear, hear.) Would the minister not agree with me that first-time buyer houses are not going to solve all our housing problems; we have families and we should be supporting families? I hope, with the new announcement that she will bring forward, that it will be a family-friendly policy.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Rushen, Mrs Crowe, Minister for Local Government and the Environment.

Mrs Crowe: I thank the hon. member for those comments, because it is well known in the department I will not have family homes referred to as first-time buyer properties. We are causing problems by building these units which are not suitable for family homes in the future. What we are looking to do – and I have met with practically every developer on the Island – is introduce affordable housing to the department's specifications, and we will be looking certainly at a different system of grant aid to enable far more people to be able to purchase homes of their own, and I really do hope to be able to bring that before hon. members in a very short time.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Middle, Mr Quayle.

Mr Quayle: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Could I ask the hon. minister: in relation to the fact that a civil servant has to apply a policy that has been established by a government department and, as such, he does not have any discretion to go beyond the defined policy, if the civil servant does not have discretion, then, as the minister is the responsible person, would she then give an undertaking that she will deal with the very serious issue of people being unable to get on to the housing list? The commissioners are not able to act with discretion, as I think she implies, and, when it is being dealt with by her officials, they are not able to act with discretion either and that this is going to be an ongoing problem until it is resolved.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Rushen, Mrs Crowe, Minister for Local Government and the Environment.

Mrs Crowe: I will certainly look into that aspect of the common criterion. It is my understanding that there is a degree of discretion with the local housing authorities.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Rushen, Mr Gill.

Mr Gill: Vainstyr Loayreyder, could I ask the hon. minister if she would agree that a formula which determines this amount in question and also reflects the contemporary housing issues is preferential to having a fixed amount as currently stands?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Rushen, Mrs Crowe, Minister for Local Government and the Environment.

Mrs Crowe: Yes, that is also part of the review that we are carrying out as to whether the fixed amount is the most suitable way of doing it; it is very difficult to keep varying amounts, but we are indeed examining the whole aspect of the House Purchase Assistance Scheme and the inclusion on public sector housing waiting lists in great depth at this time.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

Mr Karran: Vainstyr Loayreyder, would the minister not agree, if she keeps this totally unrealistic limit of £22,000 maximum, that what she will be doing is forcing the break-up of family units within society encouraging the situation where people will end up being single parents and it will be only single parents that will be able to have a local authority house if she is not careful, if she does not as a matter of urgency review the limit to a realistic upper level of at least £30,000 for those who can apply for a council house?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Rushen, Mrs Crowe, Minister for Local Government and the Environment.

Mrs Crowe: Mr Speaker, I have answered repeatedly that I am reviewing the situation. I can really add nothing further to the comments from the hon. member.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell.

Mrs Cannell: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Could the hon. minister, in respect of question 8 - because I do understand her difficulty that she is dealing with two questions on the same issue, albeit slightly different - reassure the public out there and hon. members here

today that any couple who find themselves within the £22,000 ceiling or above who are already on a local authority housing waiting list are not going to be thrown off (**Two Members:** Hear, hear.) as a consequence of the new criterion? And further, when the hon. minister referred before to local authorities having discretion, is this not the discretion to which she alluded?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Rushen, Mrs Crowe, Minister for Local Government and the Environment.

Mrs Crowe: The local housing authorities on the Isle of Man manage their own housing lists. I cannot give the assurance to the first part of the question from the hon. member for East Douglas and I cannot say how they are using their discretion.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan.

Mrs Hannan: Could I ask the Minister for Local Government and the Environment, Vainstyr Loayreyder, if the Department of Local Government has plans for building more local authority housing? The minister said she was reviewing the situation and I would hope that, within this, more local authority houses will be developed to take account of the people that cannot afford family homes. Could I also ask the minister if there could be some incentive with regard to older people as their situation changes: could they not be assisted in moving from local authority houses, if they so wished, by granting?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Rushen, Mrs Crowe, Minister for Local Government and the Environment.

Mrs Crowe: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Yes indeed, I think it is a 'yes' to all parts of that question. Yes indeed, we are hoping to build more public sector accommodation; we are also hoping to put in place a large maintenance programme for some housing that is substandard and, yes, it would be nice to see if we could encourage people to perhaps release family homes, although I do understand that people who have lived in one home for many years are quite reluctant to move into perhaps more suitable accommodation, and we are hoping to have a little bit of publicity about some of the delightful retired persons' accommodation that is available on the Isle of Man at this time, because I think people have perhaps the wrong idea of the two-bedroomed bungalows that are being provided for retired persons that would free up family homes.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Peel, Mrs Hannan.

Mrs Hannan: Thank you, Vainstyr Loayreyder. With regard to residential accommodation and maybe sheltered accommodation, could the minister look at the accommodation provided in some of these areas? Some of these areas are now out of date with bedsits; it is totally unacceptable in this day and age. Would the minister look at improving these particular areas within the residential sheltered accommodation?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Rushen, Mrs Crowe, Minister for Local Government and the Environment.

Mrs Crowe: Yes, indeed, and we have been looking at the need for just such a programme and we have had a programme of building. There is a number of developments going on at this time into what I prefer to call 'retired persons' accommodation' - not necessarily sheltered accommodation, but homes suitable for perhaps one or two persons to live in, and we have just had 12 recently built in Port St Mary, there is a scheme just ongoing now at Bemahague, so there are a number of these units coming on stream. Certainly I will be looking to make sure that the older properties are brought into line with the modern thinking.

Procedural

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes our Question Time as laid down by standing orders. However, I call on the hon. member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell.

Mrs Cannell: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I would like to move, under standing order 198, the suspension of standing orders to allow the remaining question to be put, sir.

Mr Singer: I beg to second, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Thank you. I therefore call on the hon. member for Douglas East, Mrs Cannell, to ask the question standing in her name but I would remind the hon. member Mrs Cannell, and all hon. members that this matter is covered by standing order 49(6)(b) as it relates to a select committee.

**Crowe EPH Ltd –
Financial Collapse – Resumption of
Inquiry –
Question by Mrs Cannell**

Question 9. The hon. member for Douglas East (Mrs Cannell) to ask the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Expenditure and Public Accounts:

Will the Standing Committee be resuming its inquiry into the financial collapse of Crowe EPH Ltd during the construction of the new hospital at Ballamona, and, if so, when will this resume?

Mrs Cannell: Mr Speaker, I beg leave to ask the question standing in my name.

The Speaker: The Chairman of the Standing Committee on Expenditure and Public Accounts, the hon. member for Ayre, Mr Quine.

Mr Quine: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Hon. members will recollect that a report on this matter was considered by Tynwald Court on 19th October 2000. At that time Tynwald endorsed a recommendation from the Standing Committee on Expenditure and Public Accounts that the inquiry be delayed and the position reviewed following the general election. I am pleased to advise the hon. member for East Douglas, Mrs Cannell, that the standing committee are in the process of carrying out this review.

The Speaker: Right, hon. members, that concludes the questions for oral answer. The outstanding questions are for written answer and will be circulated in accordance with our standing orders.

The Speaker: Hon. member for Ramsey, Mr Singer.

Mr Singer: Can I just ask the hon. minister in that case does that make any difference to him declaring how much it is actually costing?

The Speaker: Hon. member for Onchan, Mr Corkill, the Chief Minister.

Mr Corkill: As we know, Mr Speaker, there is a cost to this representation but I do not believe that the statement affected what I said in relation to costs it was the terminology I used that I have now corrected.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we will move on to item 15, leave to introduce, I call on the hon. member for Onchan, Mr Karran.

**Ombudsman - Establishment of -
Question by Mr Quine for Written Answer**

Question 10. The Hon Member for Ayre (Mr Quine) to ask the Chief Minister –

- (1) *Will you promote the establishment of an ombudsman so that a person who has suffered injustice through maladministration should, so far as possible, be put in the position he or she would have been in had the maladministration not occurred; and*
- (2) *in the event that you are prepared to promote the establishment of such an office, will you consider the ‘one-stop shop’ concept as proposed for the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman?*

Answer

A sub-committee of the Council of Ministers is currently looking at whether or not there is a case for the establishment of an ombudsman on the Island. I am not familiar with the ‘one stop-shop’ concept referred to in the question, but I have asked the sub-committee to take that into account in compiling their report.

**Young Persons in Care -
Absconders from Establishments -
Question by Mr Houghton
for Written Answer**

Question 11. The Hon Member for Douglas North (Mr. Houghton) to ask a Member for Health and Social Security -

In respect of each care agency how many young people have been reported to the police as missing from home for each month since September 2001 to date?

[See page KQ 115 (Table 1) for answer.]

**Young Persons in Care -
Absconders Reported to Police -
Question by Mr Houghton
for Written Answer**

Question 12. The hon member for Douglas North (Mr Houghton) to ask the Minister for Home Affairs –

How many young people have been reported as missing from home by Department of Health and Social Security care agency establishments for –

(1) *each care agency; and*

(Mr Houghton) to ask the Minister for Home Affairs -

(2) *each month since September 2001 to date?*

(1) *How many vehicles were reported as taken with the owner's consent in each month from September 2001 to date; and*

[See page KQ 116 (Table 2) for answer]

(2) *How many of these were attributable to absconders from Department of Health and Social Security care establishments in each month?*

**Vehicles Stolen - Numbers -
Young Absconders -
Question by Mr Houghton for
Written Answer**

[See page KQ 116 (Table 3) for answer]

Question 13. The Hon. Member for Douglas North

Table 1 (Question 12)

Care Facility	Sept. 01	Oct. 01	Nov. 01	Dec. 01	Jan. 02	Feb. 02	Total
Isle of Man Children's Centre	05	02	09	06	13	03	38
Manx Family Services	02	03	02	01	02	03	13
Nugent Care							
Leece Lodge 1	06	00	01	10	13	21	51
Leece Lodge 3	04	00	07	05	04	01	21
Nugent Care							
White Hoe	03	09	14	02	05	04	37
Priory House	32	20	18	14	35	37	156
Total	52	34	51	38	72	69	316

These figures include those who have left the residential unit without permission or who haven't returned at the agreed time and who have been reported to the police as missing. It should be noted that the great majority of young people are found and returned to the unit by residential care staff rather than the police.

Table 2 (Question 13)

Count of Summary		Month							
Unit	Building	Sept. 01	Oct. 01	Nov. 01	Dec. 01	Jan. 02	Feb. 02	Mar. 02	Total
DHSS	IoM Children's Centre		01	02	06	04	05		18
	Leece Lodge	14	03	14	15	14	13		73
	Nugent Care	06	05	11	03	04	10		39
	Priory House	22	16	13	14	34	21	02	122
DHSS Total		42	25	40	38	56	49	02	252
MFS	Ballacarnane Bungalow							01	01
	Close Clark Farmhouse		02		01		01		04
	Conrhenny House		01			02	03		06
	Studio House	01	03			03			07
MFS Total		01	06		01	05	04	01	18
Grand Total		43	31	40	39	61	53	03	270

NB. This data is as accurate as is possible using the current systems, but should not be regarded as definitive.

Table 3 (Question 14)

Month	No. Reported taken	No. directly attributable to absconders	Cases still <i>sub-judice</i>
September 01	19	7	2
October 01	14	3	1
November 01	3	1	1
December 01	17	2	2
January 02	21	4	3
February 02	11	2	2
Total	82	19	11