

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 116/2006
4 October 2006

The Opposition is seriously concerned at the situation facing Sue Ellen Snape, who is both a physically and partly mentally disabled person. Her family have insisted that they want to make the issue public, through the Opposition, given that they feel they have run out of options.

Shadow Minister for Social Services Charles Bruzon has written to the Government three times since June in order to drive home the urgency of the case.

Sue Ellen is 26 years old, and sustained brain damage in a hospital in Spain when she was receiving treatment as a Gibraltar sponsored patient. Her family initially wanted a place for her in the Dr Giraldi Home.

The family met with officials at the Social Services Department, but were told that the person responsible for making the decision was away on leave for a month. At that time, in June this year, Mr Bruzon wrote his first letter to the Minister and handed it to her personally.

Subsequently, Sue Ellen was placed in KGV Hospital with the reluctant consent of her family. However, at a meeting in August between the family and a panel at the hospital, it was agreed that the KGV was not the right environment for Sue Ellen to be in. The panel advised that the family should take her home, which they were unable to do given her condition.

Mr Bruzon then wrote to the Government again in August drawing the Minister's attention to the case, and he also spoke to her on the telephone.

Given that the Dr Giraldi Home is full, Sue Ellen's parents have asked the Social Services Department to provide the resources and support necessary to allow her to live with dignity in her own home.

On the week of 12 September, Mr Bruzon wrote to the Government again immediately after hearing the news that Sue Ellen had tried to commit suicide three times in one week. It is

clear to the Opposition that if she had not been in KGV Hospital this length of time, and had been given the kind of care suitable for her needs, then those distressing events may not have happened at all.

The Snape family met with the Minister, and after the meeting they were offered two hours of respite a WEEK. The family felt very strongly that this is an insult to the predicament that they find themselves in.

Commenting on the matter, Mr Bruzon said:

“The case of Sue Ellen Snape is a human tragedy for which an urgent solution is needed. It should be recalled that the brain damage occurred when she was a Gibraltar Sponsored Patient undergoing treatment in Spain. This being the case, I call on the Government to make a special effort to help out Sue Ellen and her family in their hour of need.”

ENDS