

3.6 The Connétable of St. Lawrence of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding broadband provision for patients within the General Hospital:

Will the Minister advise the Assembly whether there is broadband provision for patients within the General Hospital?

Connétable J.M. Refault of St. Peter (Assistant Minister for Health and Social Services - rapporteur):

The very short answer is there are no general broadband provisions for patients at the General Hospital. However, patients in the hospital are able to use their own mobile devices with a 3G connection to connect to the internet. While neither fixed line broadband or wi-fi is available to patients on the wards, a wi-fi service is available within the Bon Sante Restaurant for patients and staff and visitors. The provision of ward-based wi-fi service of patients is being considered as part of the development of new hospital facilities.

3.6.1 The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

The Assistant Minister said there were no general provisions for broadband within the hospital. Will he advise whether there is provision made for private patients?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

I can confirm on Rozel and Sorel Ward, the 2 private patient wings, there is wi-fi provision available there.

3.6.2 The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Will he advise why there appears to be this matter of discrimination between provision for private patients and non-provision for public patients?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

It comes down to cost priorities and to provide wi-fi throughout the General Hospital in an old building with the routing of the Ethernet cabling would be horrendous. Under the development of the new hospital we will be rolling-out wi-fi provision across the whole hospital in a phased manner, starting with the new-build up at Overdale. The second phase will be the new-build on Gloucester Street and the final phase will be renovating the old building. When those 3 phases are complete then there will be wi-fi provision across the whole hospital for all patients.

3.6.3 Deputy S. Power of St. Brelade:

Could the Assistant Minister confirm that there are routers already in many of the wards, both in the Granite Block and in the 1985 building, that that wi-fi service that is obviously there could be expanded because the equipment is already there and could be available to patients who are in the hospital on a temporary basis?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

The Deputy is entirely correct. There are routers available throughout the hospital in the clinical areas. They are there for the administration of the hospital and the clinicians to enable them to relay information to each other. We have seen some incredible increases in getting X-ray pictures straight back to the Emergency Department via the routers in there. Unfortunately the band width that is available would not allow the public to use those otherwise that would interfere with the clinical needs.

3.6.4 The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

I am sure Members will agree that this appears to be an outrageous position and the Assistant Minister is admitting to discrimination. My final question is will the Assistant Minister remind us when the new hospital will have been completed and therefore we will know how long this situation appears to be lasting? We live in a world where technology is a way of life. In fact we know even the States Chamber has stepped into the 21st century and we now have broadband facilities. Will the Assistant Minister give an undertaking to provide broadband facilities for all patients at the hospital to meet modern expectations and to end this discriminatory situation?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Firstly, I am not admitting discrimination within the General Hospital. It is a matter of priorities and I think the patients in our hospital and Islanders would far rather we spend available cash on clinical needs rather than providing wi-fi to those that may wish to have it. Certainly, I also will agree and commit that the Health and Social Services are committing to providing wi-fi across all the hospital in the future as part of the redevelopment. That will become an essential integral part of the planning process particular to the hospital to ensure we have contiguous services between all outpatients and the General Hospital at the Gloucester Street site.

3.6.5 The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

If I may, the Assistant Minister was asked to remind Members when the new hospital will have been built.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

I wish I had a crystal ball. It is certainly our hope to see the first phase completed in around 5 to 6 years with a fair wind following us, and the whole project totally completed in 10 to 12 years.