

23.03.21

11 Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M Porée of St. Helier South of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding a vaccine damage payment scheme (OQ.41/2023)

Given that the U.K. has included COVID-19 within its vaccine damage payment scheme, whereby a payment can be made for a severe disability resulting from vaccination, will the Minister advise whether there is any intention to create such a scheme in the Island, and if not, why not?

Deputy K. Wilson (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

I can advise that the U.K. Government's vaccine damage payment scheme was established under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979. This provides a one-off tax-free payment to claimants who have been found, on the balance of probabilities, to have been harmed by a vaccine for a disease that is listed in the Act. Certain vaccinations against COVID-19 were added to the Vaccine Damage Payment Act in December 2020. In Jersey, there is currently no legislative basis to set up a statutory vaccine damage scheme. However, the Government have been actively engaging with the U.K. Government to explore options for enabling those who may have been harmed by a vaccination against COVID-19, which has been administered in Jersey, to access a non-statutory assistance scheme and this work is ongoing to develop that.

3.11.1 Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

I would like to ask the Minister that presently what would the Minister suggest a person in Jersey who is under those circumstances should do to access further support or compensation?

Deputy K. Wilson:

It is important to note that, if we provide any scheme, it would be designed to provide assistance to those who have suffered severe injury. Individuals who are suffering any injury or illness currently, regardless of the precise cause, may well be eligible for social security benefits that are already in place and I would urge anybody to have those discussions with Social Security. But I am also clearly available to listen and to consider any other support that I can provide to individuals.

3.11.2 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can the Minister confirm that the vaccinations used in Jersey were a branch of the N.H.S. (National Health Service) supply of vaccinations?

Deputy K. Wilson:

Without checking the batch numbers, I can confirm that our procurement was through the U.K. route.

3.11.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Consequently, is there not a case that could be made that Jersey residents who used the same vaccinations should be part of the U.K. scheme and receive payments from it, given that we had no facility to provide our own vaccination programme without the access to the N.H.S. supply of vaccines?

Deputy K. Wilson:

Yes, as I mentioned earlier, officials are working with U.K. Government officials to gather information as to how the U.K. scheme operates in practice and to ascertain whether aspects of its infrastructure could be applied to those who received a recognised COVID-19 vaccination in Jersey. I cannot provide any more detail at the moment as these discussions are ongoing.

3.11.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

Given that Jersey and its Government is legislatively and fiscally separate to the United Kingdom and that the vaccination programmes, whether it is COVID or otherwise, were instigated and encouraged by the Jersey Government towards its Islanders, not by the U.K. Government, should it not be that, if there is any compensation scheme, it should be a Jersey scheme, which is set up, not one that we seek to delegate to effectively a foreign country?

Deputy K. Wilson:

Again, we do need to consider what the position will be for Jersey. I can mention to the Deputy that the discussions that are ongoing with U.K. officials are designed to understand what it is that would be relevant for Jersey residents. The damage payment scheme that the U.K. runs is not a redress scheme, it is an assistance scheme, and these are designed to provide a level of financial support to those who have suffered various levels of illness or injury, which is commensurate with their level of disablement. But, as I have said before, we are in conversation and discussions with U.K. colleagues to understand what it would be to arrange those responses for Jersey residents.