

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY DEPUTY C.S. ALVES OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 12th MAY 2020**

Question

“Given that, according to a recent press release from the Government, Covid-19 antibody testing will be offered to a random selection of 500 households in the Island, will the Minister –

- (a) state why these antibody tests have not been prioritised for those who have had Covid-19 symptoms, but who were not tested, or for those who live with others who tested positive, but who themselves were not tested; and
- (b) advise whether those people who fit into the two situations described in paragraph (a) will be tested for antibodies and, if so, when; and if not, why not?”

Answer

- (a) Rapid antibody testing kits have been deployed for population surveillance purposes as part of the Community Antibody Testing Survey. The test results obtained during the Community Testing Survey will be used to produce a general picture of antibody prevalence across the local population. Statistics Jersey will report on the results at a population level as part of their regular public updates on Coronavirus. Santa Clara, California¹ and New York^{2,3} have recently conducted antibody surveys to understand the spread of Coronavirus.

These test kits were not prioritised for the groups mentioned in the question because:

- the population survey required a random selection of people in order to be statistically valid, and
 - the tests are not being used to diagnose individuals with COVID-19.
- (b) As part of our preparations for a safe exit, we are now delivering a multi-faceted Island-wide testing and tracing programme based on public health intelligence, which has been established to grow in line with the expected spread of the virus as we exit lock down. This includes:
 1. Capacity to conduct 500 PCR swab tests per day to diagnose COVID-19 infection
 2. An expanded contact tracing function to follow-up confirmed COVID-19 cases
 3. A longitudinal⁴ Community Antibody Testing Survey using rapid test kits
 4. A laboratory-based diagnostic blood test to detect COVID-19 antibodies, which will be available shortly.

Our increased PCR testing capacity will be used to: identify new COVID-19 cases; to test the contacts of these confirmed cases; to proactively screen critical and essential workers and those in closed setting such as care homes, who are most at risk. Details of access to the new lab-based diagnostic antibody blood tests are being developed and will be published in due course.

¹ [COVID-19 Antibody Seroprevalence in Santa Clara County, California](#)

² [New York State Governor: Preliminary Phase I Results of Antibody Testing Study](#)

³ [New York Times: Can Antibody Tests Help End the Coronavirus Pandemic?](#)

⁴ A survey repeated with the same group of participants at regular intervals over a period of time

