

2020.04.21

14 Deputy I. Gardiner of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the strategy to ‘control the curve’ of the prevalence of Covid-19 in Jersey: (OQ.96/2020)

Will the Minister explain how there can be confidence that the Island is controlling the curve of the spread of COVID-19, given that testing capability in the Island is limited and there is insufficient data to establish how much community transmission there has been?

[11:45]

The Deputy of St. Ouen (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

I acknowledge that just at the present time our testing capability is limited. A number of data sources are being regularly monitored to understand the infection rate across the Island. Positive test results are one of them and our statistics have always assumed that there are more cases in the community than the numbers proven by positive testing. We are also working on the development of an Island-wide testing programme that will expand testing and provide additional data in the understanding of a range of issues, including the rates of community transmission. That has been the subject of earlier questioning this morning, particularly of the Chief Minister. We have spoken about the establishment of a rolling antibody survey of about 2,000 households. That will provide regular information about the prevalence of the virus in the population in a robust way. It will inform statistics and understanding about how we are controlling the curve and, as the Chief Minister has said, the first survey may even be completed during next week. It is being worked on very rapidly. Aside from that, we also understand our trajectory by monitoring the number of COVID-19 hospital patients and COVID-19-related deaths. That data is now published on the website and they are a reflection of overall infection across the community. All those measures assist us in understanding our trajectory and the influence of the curve.

3.14.1 Deputy I. Gardiner:

It has been indicated that a majority of us need to catch COVID-19 at some point. Would the Minister advise what future measures are being considered to ensure that we maintain an acceptable level of COVID infection going through the community and not overwhelming our health services?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

We do not talk about an acceptable level of infection. We know infection will be an outcome so, of course, the policy has been to control and delay and to shield so that we do not climb that curve too rapidly and have our hospital services overwhelmed. There is no strategy to infect members of the community. I think that is the best I can state at the moment.

The Bailiff:

Are you able to ask your question, Deputy Tadier?

Deputy M. Tadier:

No, Sir. Can we swap questions, if that is possible? I do not want to delay anyone when I am having trouble getting the screen up.

The Bailiff:

I will have to put you to the end and if we run out of time we run out of time.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I am sorry for the inconvenience.