

20.10.20

1 Deputy J.H. Perchard of St. Saviour of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the Government's plans to mitigate the impact of a 'Covid winter' on the most vulnerable Islanders (OQ.264/2020):

As the Island moves into its first "COVID winter", what Government plans are in place to ensure that the most vulnerable Islanders are able to maintain their independence as much as possible when accessing essentials, such as food?

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

I thank the Deputy for her question on this most important subject. Advice for Islanders at high risk currently continues to make risk-based personal decisions around the activities they engage in with the help of the activity risk guide and other advice and support available on gov.je, and also sent to individuals by letter through their G.P.s (general practitioners). We continue to promote the support and resources available for mental and physical health as well as practical needs through Connect Me, also available at gov.je or through the helpline for those who do not use the internet. Work is ongoing through Connect Me to uphold strong partnership working throughout the Parishes, which are prepared to draw upon the volunteer workforce once again, throughout the winter, if the public health guidance for this group changes. This will ensure Islanders at high risk can access the support they need, whether it is having their shopping delivered to them, having someone to talk to or other needs.

[9:45]

Connect Me also collates resources on how to stay active and connected for all age groups to ensure the mental health and well-being of those who remain in isolation is protected.

4.1.1 Deputy J.H. Perchard:

I thank the Minister for the response although the things he listed seem to be the same things that we were talking about a few months ago. So I suppose my supplementary question is: what changes are being made to the guidance for the most vulnerable Islanders as we approach winter, given the fact that winter is likely to look and be a very different experience for all Islanders in the light of the rising cases of COVID on the Island, and the fact that we expect cases to go up in winter.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

There are probably no dramatic changes and we continue to monitor the situation constantly. So it is possible that advice may change but, as the Deputy will know, COVID-19 activities are being carefully monitored and if numbers increase beyond confined isolated clusters we may once more strongly advise Islanders at high risk to avoid all indoor activities, as was the case at level 2 of our safe exit strategy. If that does take place, we will still continue to encourage Islanders at high risk to cautiously engage in outdoor exercise where this is possible, connecting with a small number of friends and family and taking care of themselves in that way. Thank you.

4.1.2 Senator K.L. Moore:

Previously it is my understanding that this service of volunteers relied in many respects on people who were unable to work at that time, so they instead turned their hands to volunteering. What evidence does the Minister have that there are still a good number of volunteers available to assist those vulnerable members in our community?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

My understanding is that there is still a good cohort of people who are willing to volunteer and assist in a variety of roles.

4.1.3 Deputy J.H. Perchard:

I am just going to go back to the original question which is about vulnerable people maintaining their independence when accessing essentials and I was wondering whether the Minister had considered, and would consider, as part of the service he is providing, the Government taking a bit more action to ensure, just for example, that shops could perhaps have a time just for vulnerable people where they would come and show their letters. Just as one example of a way in which we could promote independence of people while living in this difficult time.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

It has been discussed and I will ask again that this be discussed among or in our contacts with retailers. There are also bodies within government; there is a Financial Impact Action Group which is a group of charities working with government to ensure vulnerable adults receive support. There is a community task force which deals with needs from the food bank and that is ready to mobilise as and when required. The Minister for Social Security is involved with an older persons' cluster and mental health cluster, which are partnerships between charities and the Government of Jersey, involved in delivering meals and providing support. Thank you.

The Bailiff:

I should say before we move on to the second question, as Members will have noted from the Order Paper, there are some 28 questions listed for this period. That, if it goes strictly on a pro rata basis, allows for a little over 4 minutes per question. If we are reaching the point where that seems unlikely to get through a large number of those questions, then I may have to say that there will be no supplementals to supplementary questions but I will keep that under review as we go forward.