

20.10.20

**6 Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding exemptions to the self-isolation rules established by the Government of Jersey (OQ.278/2020):**

Further to reports that some 80 foreign workers have been given exemptions to enable them to avoid the current government self-isolation rules, will the Minister advise whether such an arrangement is in place and, if so, will he assure Members that this practice will cease forthwith; and, in the event that this assurance cannot be given, will the Minister explain why not?

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

Permission may be granted not to isolate where it is critical to the running of a service or business for a person to travel to the Island and work during an isolation period. This would be subject to strict conditions relating to infection control. On 18th September, after endorsement by the competent authorities Ministers, a centralised process for the granting of permission not to isolate for work purposes was launched on gov.je. Under the process, employers may apply in advance, providing evidence of the risk mitigations in place in the workplace. If permission is granted, it applies only to the period of time the worker is at work; at all other times they must isolate for the period of time designated by their travel history. They must undergo the testing regime specified by their travel history and they must observe all the other strict conditions of the permission.

**4.6.1 The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

Would the Minister confirm that that regime which he outlined is sufficiently robust to respond to the rapid changes in controls on the borders that we are presently experiencing?

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

These matters are subject to constant review and enforcement measures and each application received will be considered in the light of the situation on the Island.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade.**

I thank the Minister.

**4.6.2 Connétable S.A. Le Sueur-Rennard of St. Saviour:**

I would just like to know, are they the same 80 people that come through every time and, if so, are they tested when they arrive and when they leave? Also, what areas are they from? If we are doing this traffic light thing, are they from a red area? I think the Islanders need to know.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

I do not have a breakdown of how many from reds, how many from ambers, how many from greens and, in any event, those areas have changed recently. There were a number of questions there of which, I am sorry, I have forgotten. If the Connétable could repeat the earlier questions.

**The Connétable of St. Saviour:**

Yes, the first one was: are they the same 80 people who come through every time, the same workforce?

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

No, there would be some who are coming for a need that is just a one-off and others that may be more regular workforce.

#### **4.6.3 The Connétable of St. Saviour:**

As the Minister is unable to tell us what traffic-light zone they come from, are we not taking their names and addresses?

#### **The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes, indeed, they will be taken at the border and our teams will have names, addresses; they will know where these employees are staying.

#### **The Connétable of St. Saviour:**

So if they come from a red zone, we are still allowing them through?

#### **The Bailiff:**

No, that was a supplementary to the supplementary.

#### **The Connétable of St. Saviour:**

Yes, I do apologise.

#### **4.6.4 Deputy J.H. Perchard:**

Under which policy was the exemption described in the original question enabled and could the Minister ask officers to please circulate this policy to Members so that we can better understand all possible exemption scenarios?

#### **The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

The guidance and application process is on [gov.je/Health/Coronavirus/Travel](http://gov.je/Health/Coronavirus/Travel), so the conditions, the very strict conditions set out, are there available for all to see. This was agreed by competent authorities Ministers on 18th September and the processes administered by the contact tracing team.

#### **4.6.5 Deputy J.H. Perchard:**

Could the Minister please instruct officers to directly send me the links to the exemption policy so that I can better understand all possible exemption scenarios?

#### **The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes, I will ask Ministers to communicate directly with the Deputy. Can I also refer the Deputy to Deputy Morel's written question, I think it is number 371, filed today which gives that further detail?

#### **4.6.6 Deputy M.R. Higgins:**

Can the Minister tell us whether there have been any breaches of the conditions that attach to these exemptions and, furthermore, whether any of these people have been involved in any of the contagious outbreaks?

#### **The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

I am advised that there was one exempt worker who tested positive and inadvertently went straight to work instead of waiting for his arrival test results. He was isolated immediately the test results came through, so one appears to have happened in this case.

#### **4.6.7 Deputy K.F. Morel of St. Lawrence:**

Would the Minister agree that due to the isolation policies and the fact that these workers are remaining within their hotel environments when not at work, and also due to the sheer small numbers of workers involved, that the main threat to the Island from coronavirus coming through our borders remains through domestic travel to the U.K. and not via these 80 or so workers from France?

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes, I do agree with the Deputy. Because of the measures taken if permission is granted to any of these companies or businesses or services, there really are very strict conditions around infection control and the movement of these people within the Island which are, of course, supervised by their employers, as well as checks being undertaken by contact tracing. So the applications are all risk-assessed in that regard and the risk is assessed as an appropriate one to take in the interests of the Island because these are critical workers. The Deputy is perhaps right that there may be greater risks coming through the borders because of the numbers involved and the difficulty in the regular follow-up of those people and their requirement to isolate. But I think attention is moving away from the borders now as fewer people travel into the Island and we really need to start thinking about on-Island measures because it is quite possible that we will see community transmission in the Island because we are entering the winter period when the virus will be more virulent. We must concentrate on efforts among ourselves to control the spread of infection and remove this complete focus on the borders because the risks are moving more into the community.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

It sort of follows on from the answer that was just given. When I asked ...

**The Bailiff:**

Can I just remind Members that we must stick within the parameters of the question which was the exemptions given? It strayed a little bit there in the answer but if you would like to ask a supplementary on that basis then ...

**4.6.8 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Yes, it is regards the exemption which requires isolation away from work. Is the Minister confident that the mechanism for that isolation, those people getting food, the travel to and from work, recreation, for example, is strong enough to ensure that they are effectively living in a bubble while they are here as part of that exemption rule?

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

When employers make application, they have to assure officers of the infection control measures they will put in place, which include providing independent transport to and from the workplace and ensuring the worker has suitable accommodation and support to isolate, which includes taking meals as well as the provision of hygiene facilities and ensuring physical distance. All of this is risk-assessed and monitored.

**4.6.9 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Can the Minister reassure that those procedures are monitored and that the staff in hotels who are serving these guests have suitable protection as well when they are encountering the bubbles in close quarters?

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

I am sure this would all be part of the risk assessment so that the officers who may consider the exemptions will consider the appropriateness of the place of residence of these workers and the ability of staff who may be working there to protect themselves and to control the spread of infection.

**The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

My questions have been satisfactorily answered by the Minister.