

2.10 Connétable J. Gallichan of St. Mary of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the closure of the Newgate Street entrance to the General Hospital:

Given its proximity to Patriotic Street car park, will the Minister explain why the Newgate Street entrance to the General Hospital closes before the end of visiting time? Will the Minister also advise whether any changes to short-stay parking near the hospital have been considered, which would facilitate the collection of patients on their discharge, especially when they cannot walk unaccompanied, for example following sedation?

The Deputy of Trinity (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

I would like to thank the Constable of St. Mary for asking this question and bringing this to my attention. I will be looking at improving access and the cost implications of doing so. The present access to the General Hospital is via the Gwyneth Huelin Wing entrance at Newgate Street, which is from 7.00 a.m. through to 8.00 p.m. Mondays to Fridays and 7.00 a.m. until 1.00 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays. The reason access into an exit from Gwyneth Huelin wing is restricted outside these hours is one of security and fire reasons. As you are well aware, there are outpatient departments too. Collection of patients is facilitated by means of the Gwyneth Huelin ramp between 7.00 a.m. and 11.00 p.m. Mondays to Fridays and 7.00 a.m. until 3.00 p.m. at weekends. It is unlikely that sedated patients will be discharged outside these hours, but in the event that access was needed, portering and security staff would be able to supervise an exit to help. Parking and emergency collection and drop-off is also available at the Parade entrance, which is policed by the T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) parking control, which are very flexible and understand the needs of the patients. A parking group has been formed and meets on a regular basis to review any problems related to parking. However, parking is very limited and while trying to help may not be able to satisfy everyone who would like to park close to the front door. I would like to invite the Constable to go and see that group and to discuss her concerns with them.

2.10.1 The Connétable of St. Mary:

Firstly, I would like to thank the Minister for her answer and also for her proposed invitation. I would be delighted to meet with that group. I wonder if the Minister would agree that as a very small step towards making life easier for visitors to the hospital some sort of highly visible sign could be erected at the Newgate Street entrance so that it is obvious from the street level whether that door is open or closed. I have had experience in the last few weeks of quite elderly ... not disabled but still finding it difficult to walk, having to go all the way up the ramp to try the door, then to come all the way down and pretty much circumnavigate the entire hospital to visit Rayner Ward, the lift for which is just inside that entrance.

The Deputy of Trinity:

That is an excellent idea and I will get that done as soon as possible. I totally agree with her. Walking from Newgate Street all the way round the front, especially on a cold winter's rainy day, and round to the Parade is a bit unsatisfactory, but the main building is, shall we say, not wheelchair friendly, not access friendly. The Gwyneth Huelin Wing with its outpatient departments, safety and fire precautions have to be adhered to as well.

2.10.2 The Deputy of St. John:

Given that this has been a problem for a number of years that the Newgate Street entrance gets closed late evenings or from 8.00 p.m. onwards and weekends, is there no way that this can be reviewed with a view to having this open, in particular now that there is work going on across the main entrance? I know people who have great difficulty walking around that building. It is difficult to get in and out to the different wards, but some way needs to be found that while the hospital is open that Newgate Street entrance needs to be operational. I must declare an interest. I have a member of my family in hospital at the moment, and it has been raised to me in the last few days how difficult this is. So I sincerely hope that for all those people who have to visit infirm people ...

The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):

Put the question, please, Deputy. Time is running out.

The Deputy of St. John:

Will the Minister please look at doing something to help all the poor people who need to visit from that entrance?

The Deputy of Trinity:

Yes, as I said, I will be reviewing it and with the Constable of St. Mary's input I hope we can find a way out, because I totally agree, it is not right. It is unsatisfactory. I have only been in post just over a month, but I will try as hard as I can and as soon as I can.