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6 Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding a ban on the sale of flavoured e-cigarettes: (OQ.222/2019)

Will the Minister advise the Assembly whether he is considering a ban on the sale of flavoured e-cigarettes?

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

I am not presently considering a ban on the sale of flavoured e-cigarettes in Jersey. Vaping is a relatively new phenomenon and we do not know whether it carries long-term risk, but there is a body of evidence from adult smokers that the availability of flavours helps them switch to less harmful e-cigarettes as a route to help them stop smoking completely. Banning flavours might, therefore, mean more adults slipping back to smoking. This would mean more adults as smoking role models for young people, which is the key driver in young people starting to smoke. There have been some concerns raised that flavoured e-cigarettes might encourage young people to start vaping and then to go on and try smoking. However, what we know at this time is that vaping by children and young people in Jersey is low compared to smoking, with only 4 per cent of 12 to 18 year-olds using e-cigarettes once, or more, per week. In addition, there is no evidence that e-cigarettes are a gateway into smoking, as smoking rates among children and young people continue to decline, alongside reduced smoking across the whole population. These vaping products are definitely not products for children and young people. The sale and supply of e-cigarettes to under-18s was prohibited by regulation in 2016.

3.6.1 Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Flavours encourage young people to believe that vaping is innocuous, with examples being cherry sherbet and strawberry lemon fizz. How does the Minister intend to protect our children from a life of addiction?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

It may, on the face of it, appear that these flavours are attractive, but the view and the recent evidence is that the main driver on e-cigarette use among under-18s is experimentation, with a much smaller number of them saying they were influenced by e-cigarette flavours. The small number of under-18s, who have used e-cigarettes, say the main reason for trying them is to help them stop smoking tobacco products. The public health team will always keep this question under review and are in regular contact with jurisdictions overseas, but at the present time it is not the view that children are extensively attracted by these flavours.

3.6.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Is the Minister aware of actions in the United States to ban these flavoured products and that there is a body of evidence that is giving real concern to the American medical authorities about them? Again, will he not take note of that, because it is more advanced in the United States than it has been here?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Our public health team do follow developments in America, but I am advised that the issues in America are very different. There it is possible that users have been vaping illicit drugs and unregulated vape products are sold there, whereas in the U.K. (United Kingdom), the U.K. Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency has tight controls around the vaping products available. Of course, those products are the ones that we see in Jersey. At the

moment, the health issues that may have arisen in the U.S.A. (United States of America) have not been reflected among people vaping electronic cigarettes in the U.K. and no cases similar to those reported in the U.S. have been noted by authorities in the U.K.

3.6.3 Deputy S.M. Ahier:

The legal age to buy e-cigarettes is currently 18. Should the minimum age be raised to 21 to try to prevent young people from vaping? Also, will the Minister consider putting health warnings on the packaging, similar to those that are on cigarette packets, in addition to the nicotine warning?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Dealing with the latter point first, I think it is quite possible that health warnings might be introduced on these products when it becomes clearer what the health implications of vaping are. At the moment, because they are such a new product, there is discussion about exactly whether they have any long-term effects on health, so some time is needed. As to the age limits, personally I am not sure whether extending the limitation from aged 18 to aged 21 will make a great difference. Young adults, aged 18, can certainly be aware of risk involved and the evidence is that among young people rates of smoking, both tobacco products and vaping products, are falling, which is a fortunate thing.