

2019.01.15

**13 Deputy K.G. Pamplin of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding plans to support Islander's medical needs in the event of a 'No Deal Brexit': [OQ.6/2019]**

Will the Minister advise what plans, if any, are in place to support Islanders' medical needs, including the delivery of medical supplies to the Island, the transfer of patients and their families in and out of the Island in the event of a no-deal Brexit on 29th March?

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

Health and Community Services has been working in partnership with the States of Jersey External Relations Brexit team, the U.K. Department of Health and Social Care and the U.K. Department for Transport. All those bodies have developed a comprehensive Brexit contingency plan in the event of a day one no-deal Brexit. This covers medicines, supplies and patient travel. In respect of medicines and supplies, in December 2018 - just last month - the Department of Health and Social Care in the U.K. requested all the U.K. hospitals, and extended this to the Crown Dependencies, not to stockpile medicines or supplies to prevent shortages. My department has received written assurance that Crown Dependencies, including ourselves, will have equal access to the U.K. stockpile of medicines and supplies and that the supply chains will be maintained in their present format. In respect of transportation, our ports and harbours colleagues have been assured that medicines and medical supplies will be prioritised, along with food and fuel, as essential requirements. To date we are advised by the U.K. Department for Transport that they are not anticipating disruption to Channel Islands services, though contact still continues to maintain that assurance. In respect of patients and families travelling on and off the Island, the current emergency in-flight service will not be affected by Brexit because many patients travel on scheduled flights, for example, to Southampton for radiotherapy. In the event of scheduled flight disruption, if a flight is delayed or cancelled, the department's travel office would contact the U.K. hospital and the appointment would need to be rescheduled for later that day or on another day. In the unlikely event of significant flight disruption or lack of seat availability, patients will be prioritised as to their clinical need; priorities are either urgent or soon or routine. As a last resort, there will be the option of using the ferry and, therefore, patients travelling to the U.K. would travel the day before their procedure or their appointment. In appropriate cases, chartering an aircraft would be a final option. But I do know that much work is being done on preparing contingency plans and, of course, the hope is that in the event of a no-deal Brexit arrangements would be maintained and would be held as normal as quickly as possible.

**3.13.1 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

I thank the Minister for his answer. Given the co-operation agreement between our counterparts in Guernsey, have there been discussions about how the Islands could help each other through this, what could be, difficult transitional period?

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes, all the discussions taking place with Whitehall departments have involved Guernsey too so there is a close working between the 2 Islands.

**3.13.2 Deputy K.F. Morel:**

The Minister mentioned assurances from the N.H.S. (National Health Service). Unfortunately, assurances are just pieces of paper. Could the Minister confirm whether or not his department is also looking at alternative supply routes when the situation occurs that these assurances fail to come through?

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes, I know all has been considered. I think the difficulty is identifying alternative supply routes so, for example, medicines that might be manufactured on the Continent would normally come through to the U.K. first and have their English language badging or printing put on to them. It would not be appropriate for us to source medicines, say, in France or Germany which are labelled in another language but I know all options have been thoroughly considered. There has been some comprehensive work that has gone on. At the moment, Ministers are satisfied with the assurances so far received but we are continually monitoring the situation.

**3.13.3 The Deputy of St. Mary:**

I know from recent conversations I had with certain members of the medical profession that their concern is that their concerns have not been noted at ministerial or government level.

[12:15]

Could the Minister confirm that there is a forum or means of communication whereby such senior practitioners are able to contact the health authorities to stipulate what their principle concerns are in order that you might allay them? Thank you.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

I have not been personally aware of any difficulties expressed by G.P.s but I do know also there have been meetings with G.P. representatives and if there are continuing concerns, perhaps the Deputy could contact me and we could ensure that there is a line of communication available to allay concerns.

**3.13.4 Deputy K.G. Pamplin:**

Given his comments, the Minister mentions about the transporting of patients, given the recent news that Air Rescue Channel Islands has launched a charitable organisation endeavouring to seek an air helicopter to transfer patients. Given the assurances available, I would like to hear the Minister's comments on this endeavour to provide this service, in my opinion, way overdue.

**The Deputy of St. Ouen:**

Yes, those seeing to operate that service have been in touch with me and the department and my Assistant Minister, Deputy Raymond, is taking a particular interest and is meeting with those persons and reporting back to myself and the department because it is certainly something worth considering and whether that would be an appropriate service for the Island.