

2020.03.09

18 Deputy R.J. Ward of the Minister for Social Security regarding the access to healthcare and sickness benefit by those people who had self-isolated as a consequence of the outbreak of Coronavirus: (OQ.71/2020)

May I ask the Minister what assessment has the Minister made of the effects of the 6 month qualifying period for access to health care and social security, sickness benefits on the potential need for sections of the Island's population to self-isolate in the event of an outbreak of coronavirus?

Deputy J.A. Martin (The Minister for Social Security):

I am very grateful to the Deputy for raising this issue and I am sorry it is not really out there as it should be. I can confirm that, from 12th February, anyone who needed to miss work because they are self-isolating on current health advice is able to claim sickness benefit. People are already doing this. A claim is provided to cover the 2 weeks of self-isolation at the standard rate of £222.53 per week. Recently I can also confirm the same level of financial support is available to any worker who does not qualify under the normal rules of contributory benefits. In both cases, they should contact C.L.S. (Customer and Local Services) on 444444 and they will be advised of what they need to do. They will be asked to provide copies of their travel documents by email and to confirm they are not able to work from home. They do not need a medical certificate and they should not go to their G.P. (general practitioner). Re the hospital, if an individual does contract coronavirus, or is feeling very unwell and needs hospital treatment, they will be treated free of charge regardless of how long they have lived in Jersey. Phone 999 if you are very unwell. I must emphasise again: do not go to your G.P.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

That seems clear. It seems that everybody is entitled to their sickness benefit and can self-isolate.

3.18.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

What is the difference between somebody who catches an equally contagious virus or illness and has to stay at home for 2 weeks to self-isolate, who has not been here for 6 months and somebody who might have caught a virus that has not yet had any cases confirmed in the Island? Why should somebody be treated differently in the former context? I am sorry if it displeases the Minister, because I can hear her sighs already.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

No, I absolutely appreciate where the Deputy is coming from. At the moment, it is one crisis at a time, one virus at a time. The health advice is on coronavirus worldwide. We are ahead of the game. I have been doing this since 12th February, because we said to officers: "Why would you need to go to a G.P. and get a certificate, when what can we do? We can do this." There are a few things you have to tick the box. This might get worse, there might be other viruses and we want to be ahead of the game. This covers this question and I will listen to the World Health Organization and what the current advice is. It is changing daily. Remember the number 444444, so it is C.L.S.; 445566 for Coronavirus. Please all remember that and I hope the media are listening. Front page tomorrow, please. I really mean that. People need to know. Ring up; do not go to your surgery.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Just a final supplementary, could I just say I was not aware of ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

I was hoping to move on to questions 19 and 20, that is Deputy Alves and you. But it must be you if you want to ask another question.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

How long have we got, Sir?

The Deputy Bailiff:

About 2 or 3 minutes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

On a point of order, is there any scope to extend question time?

The Deputy Bailiff:

No, there is not, unfortunately. It is not possible. I have looked into it quite carefully, but it is not possible.