

21.01.19

21 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding partners accompanying pregnant women for scans (OQ.13/2021):

Will the Minister advise what the current position is in relation to ensuring support partners are able to accompany pregnant women for scans; and whether it is possible for individuals to be tested, and to isolate in advance of planned scans, to enable this to happen?

The following response was provided in writing in accordance with Standing Order 63(9) as the oral question was not asked before the end of the time allowed for Oral Questions:

The current position is that unfortunately we are unable to safely accommodate partners attending with women for their scans.

I understand that women value the support from a partner, relative, friend or other person throughout pregnancy and childbirth as it facilitates emotional wellbeing and is a key component to safe and personalised maternity care. However, we remain in a position where we know we still have COVID transmission in our community, and whilst our numbers are reducing, we still have a significant number of cases. Our priority at this time has to be focused on preventing and controlling the spread of COVID 19 infection to keep women, their partners and our staff safe.

I can assure you that we haven't taken this decision lightly and have taken all elements of the scanning service into account when reaching a decision, and these remain under review, with a most recent review taking place last week. We have considered testing for women and their partners in this review and based on advice from Infection Prevention and Control and taking everything into account we are unable to alter the position at this time. The elements considered in addition to testing are:

- 1) The current COVID community activity in Jersey whilst reducing remains high and we still have community transmission - circa 300
- 2) The output of a documented health and safety workplace risk assessment using the Government of Jersey COVID 19 workplace safety plan to determine the safe working of staff
- 3) Only 1 full-time sonographer who can provide the full range of services, short of diverting consultants to do this work to the detriment of other services
- 4) One hospital and one maternity service in Jersey
- 5) The physical environment and our limited ability to maintain social distancing in the antenatal clinic as per the public health guidelines – for example: the antenatal clinic has one way in and out and therefore we are unable to operate a one-way system. The waiting area has minimal seating or space to physically distance patients and partners from others
- 6) The scanning room itself which has very little in the way of ventilation
- 7) Relocation of the scanning facilities has been considered, however, space is very limited at the General Hospital and the clinical equipment requires specific data ports.

We will continue to monitor the situation and when it is safe to do so will lift the current position.