

21.03.02

16 Deputy C.S. Alves of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding workforce testing for Covid-19 (OQ.59/2021):

Are reminders sent to the people taking part in workforce testing, given that such testing is meant to be undertaken at regular intervals?

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

Islanders who are eligible for workforce testing are required to book in for their first test appointment. Information on this process is provided through the Government website. Once registered, the appointment details are provided by email. Following completion of the first appointments, the process is then automated where follow-up appointments are provided by email with the timings of follow-up appointments being based on the priority group registration.

3.16.1 Deputy C.S. Alves:

Can the Minister state when this automated follow-up testing email system was set up? I have personally signed up for the workforce testing last year and have not had any follow-up email sent. I am also aware of other members of my family and friends who are in the same situation. So could the Minister state when this automatic follow-up appointment system was put into place, please?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I will endeavour to find out that other information because I do not have it immediately to hand. I suspect it has been a process that has been developed over the months we have been undertaking workforce testing, but I will come back to the Deputy on that.

3.16.2 Deputy I. Gardiner:

Would the Minister advise if there is any active engagement and encouragement from the health services to the industries such as hospitality or retail to engage with workforce screening?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes, there have been very significant efforts made. For example, very recently with the opening of hospitality, our COVID teams were out among hospitality venues encouraging the staff there and the owners of hospitality businesses to encourage their staff to undertake testing. That will continue as we move through the pandemic and open up other sectors. Our COVID teams will work with sectors to encourage appropriate testing.

3.16.3 Deputy I. Gardiner:

Back in 2020, in November or December, business owners received an email from the COVID team offering workforce screening for the employees. Since then reminders did not arrive to the business owners. Would the Minister consider resending emails to the business owners encouraging them to send the workforce for screening?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Yes, I will ask the team if we can do that. Whatever encouragement we can give will help, though those workers who did go for testing will by now be receiving follow-up reminders if, as stated, the automated process is working correctly.

3.16.4 Deputy C.S. Alves:

Would the Minister consider looking at an online booking system for tests, given that this automated system obviously highlighted by myself and Deputy Gardiner is not working at 100 per cent? I know that when I made the appointment over the phone and when I have made the appointment for other people over the phone things like emails were not taken down. Obviously, phone numbers were but emails were not. Would the Minister consider looking at an online system for booking tests in order to avoid there not being a follow-up?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

We will look at what an online system might remedy. If it is useful and practical to do so, we will certainly consider that, by all means.