

2025.11.11

2.4 Deputy J. Renouf of St. Brelade of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the total cost of Covid and flu vaccines that were not used (OQ.247/2025):

Further to Written Question 393/2025 and in light of the increase in the Health budget included in the Proposed Budget (Government Plan) 2026-2029, will the Minister provide the total cost of COVID and flu vaccines that were not used in 2024 and in 2025 to date?

Deputy T.J.A Binet of St. Saviour (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

There was no cost to the Island for unused COVID vaccinations in 2024, and that is because the vaccine was provided free of charge by the U.K. for the eligible groups.

[10:00]

This is the same for 2025. With regard to the value of unused flu vaccine; because there are 3 different vaccine types, all with different prices, and a large part of the campaign was delivered by private providers, the exact details of vaccine types used and vaccine types remaining is not actually available. That said, we are pretty clear that both COVID and flu vaccine uptake in 2024 was down compared to 2023. That situation certainly was not predicted and we accept that the levels of unused vaccine was probably quite high. As for 2025, we are still at a very early stage, but early indications suggest that we are ahead of this time last year, and efforts will continue to encourage uptake. We also reduced the amount of vaccine ordered this year, and given that we are expecting a rise in influenza infections in the next couple of weeks, we are expecting to see waste levels reduced considerably for the coming winter. I hope that answers the Deputy's question.

2.4.1 Deputy J. Renouf:

My calculations based on the answer to Written Question 393 suggests that about 45 per cent of COVID vaccines were unused as a result of the data that he provided. It is reassuring to know that cost does not fall on the Jersey taxpayer. But I wonder, given that it is nevertheless a waste, what does the Minister think are the reasons for that level of unused vaccines?

Deputy T.J.A Binet:

I would just say that I am no happier than the Deputy about the idea of any waste. The Deputy made reference to the fact that we are looking for more money for Health and I fully accept that we should not be allowing waste in any way, shape or form. I do wonder, there seems to be some online resistance to vaccinations, which I think has been very damaging and I think that is seen across the vaccination piece. I would say in terms of being accurate, everything that we do in health, as I have made the point before, is manual and I think if we had a fully digitised system we would be very much better able to judge at the end of a season of what had not been used. We need that data because we need to make sure that we are spending our money properly. I am in accord with the Deputy very much on the need to save money.

2.4.2 Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:

Would the Minister advise if the surplus vaccines have been donated to vulnerable groups, Overseas Territories, if it could be used and not wasted?

Deputy T.J.A Binet:

I am afraid off the top of my head I could not answer that. But knowing the team as I do at Public Health, I would imagine that if that was a possibility that is something that they would have done. I am not entirely sure if that is possible but if it is possible I would certainly hope that they have done that.

2.4.3 Deputy I. Gardiner:

I welcome the Minister's first answer. Would the Minister summarise what lessons have been incorporated in the future immunisation planning?

Deputy T.J.A. Binet:

We have a joint committee for vaccinations and immunisations and they look at all the data that they can achieve every year. They make decisions about what types of vaccine and the amount of vaccines to order again for the next year, so that task falls to them. I can only suggest that they do that to the best of their ability. But, as I say, if we had better data we could make better decisions.

2.4.4 Deputy J. Renouf:

The issue arose because a member of the public told me that they had asked for a vaccine and heard that there was an excess of vaccinations and had asked to be included and were told they could not be, even though vaccines were being thrown away. My question to the Minister is: would he be prepared to consider widening the criteria for vaccinations so that the vaccines are not thrown away and more people are able to take advantage of them?

Deputy T.J.A Binet:

On the face of it that seems a suggestion. It is not something I think we should do at the beginning of a campaign because obviously the object of the exercise is always to order the right amount for vulnerable people. As I say, once again, if we had the data that we require if we are halfway through a campaign and we can see that the uptake is not as good as it should be, then it would make perfect sense to include people who are less vulnerable. As I say, if we can systemise to the extent of achieving that, that would seem to be a perfectly logical suggestion.