

## **Minutes - PFAS Meeting: Report 1 Launch & Government Response**

**Friday 1 December 2023, 5:30pm - 7:30pm at the Atlantic hotel**

### Attendees

Members of the public were joined by:

- Chief Minister, Deputy Moore
- Minister for Health and Social Services, Deputy Wilson
- Minister for the Environment, Deputy Renouf
- Dr Steve Hajioff, Independent Chair, PFAS Scientific Advisory Panel

Along with Government officers: Professor Peter Bradley, Director of Public Health and Medical Officer for Health, Grace Norman, Deputy Director of Public Health, Dr Tim du Feu, Head of Land Resource Management, plus support staff.

### **Meeting notes**

Peter Bradley introduced the meeting and Ministers, guests and officers present were introduced.

### The purpose of the meeting:

- To summarise the Panel's recommendations on the potential for a therapeutic phlebotomy service
- Inform Islanders of the Government's response to the recommendations
- An opportunity for Islander input and questions with Ministers

Grace Norman recapped on the PFAS Panel membership and scope of their work.

The slides presented at the meeting can be found here [Government of Jersey Presentation PFAS meeting 1 Dec.pdf](#)

### **Report 1: Interim report into the potential for a therapeutic phlebotomy service**

An overview was given on the Panel recommendations which were that Government offer a programme of therapeutic phlebotomy as an interim measure pending detailed review of health effects & effectiveness of alternative interventions.

### Eligibility criteria:

- Participated in the blood testing programme in 2022 with PFAS results of at least 10 nanograms per millilitre and until levels reach median background levels
- Aged between 18 and 65 who weigh at least 50 kg; outside of this by clinical judgement
- Not known to be pregnant

Full report available [First Report of the Independent PFAS Scientific Advisory Panel for Jersey \(gov.je\)](#)

## **Government response**

The Government accept the Panel's recommendations and ask that a service is made available in line with the Panel's recommendations.

### Service eligibility

The Panel's eligibility recommendation is for people who participated in the blood testing programme in 2022 with PFAS results of at least 10 nanograms per millilitre and until levels reach median background levels.

The decision from Ministers was as above and additionally, anyone from the 2022 testing programme with a result of 8-10 nanograms per millilitre can be re-tested. If results are 10 or greater, they can be considered for the service.

### Service specification

Outline service development has begun, and funding has been identified. There will be a clinical service, specialist PFAS blood testing using labs off-Island, plus data monitoring and service evaluation.

### Service design

Grace Norman outlined that, to the best of her knowledge, this will be the first time that a therapeutic phlebotomy service has been set up as an intervention for PFAS body burden, rather than in the context of an experimental study. Islanders are invited to participate in service design to make sure that it is fit for purpose.

A rough temperature check was asked of the room to indicate if they were interested in a therapeutic phlebotomy service and people were asked to leave feedback slips after the meeting and provide contact details if they were interested to find out more about contributing to the service design. People were asked to email any comments on service design to [publichealth@gov.je](mailto:publichealth@gov.je) by 12 January.

## **Questions and answers**

Question: In report 3, if evidence comes to light for a better intervention, how would people be impacted if they had already agreed to start therapeutic phlebotomy? There are also other potential medications which people may choose to try which have not been assessed.

- Steve Hajjoff replied that report 1 was an interim measure and that the Panel will look at other interventions as part of report 3, including consideration of plasmapheresis and medications. If someone has therapeutic phlebotomy, they should see a reduction in PFAS body burden. If their body burden is lower after therapeutic phlebotomy, then they may not need other interventions.

- If someone had PFAS blood levels in the eligible range for alternative interventions in the future, they would not be excluded from such services because of having previously participated in therapeutic phlebotomy.

Question: How easily could you switch from delivering a therapeutic phlebotomy service to a plasmapheresis service?

- It is expected that there would be a longer lead time in setting up another service compared to therapeutic phlebotomy. Steve Hajioff explained that he couldn't see a clinical reason why a person couldn't have therapeutic phlebotomy and then have another intervention later if they were eligible based on PFAS results.

Question: The Australian trial had 3 intervention groups [donation of whole blood, donation of blood plasma, and a control]. PFHxS is of particular concern in Jersey; if you look at Australian research there was a difference between the blood donation group and plasma group for PFHxS, with better outcomes seemingly from plasma rather than phlebotomy.

- Steve Hajioff mentioned that it may be better, but there may be many reasons for this, including that participants were giving plasma more frequently than whole blood. The Australian study was small and there were some limitations with the study. The Panel also has to be realistic about what can be delivered in Jersey and there are additional challenges with plasma donation in comparison to phlebotomy, and additionally there are additional side effects also.

Question: An Islander commented on the Canadian study on a family which was a small number of people. (Genuis et al [Phlebotomy Treatment for Elimination of Perfluoroalkyl Acids in a Highly Exposed Family: A Retrospective Case-Series - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#))

- Steve Hajioff reiterated that the Panel are recommending therapeutic phlebotomy as an interim service because its quicker to get up and running and people can have a service as quickly as possible.

Question: If there is no evidence that PFAS causes ill health, why are we doing this?

- Steve Hajioff explained that there are methodological difficulties in establishing whether a chemical in the environment has an impact on health. He gave an example to illustrate his point. With cyanide it is easy to make the health impact connection as cyanide affects you straight away and has the same outcome on everyone. However, if the chemical in question is one that affects people on a longer time frame or affects some people differently from others, it can be more difficult to see the health impacts. Consequently, the link between PFAS and health outcomes is difficult to measure.

- The Panel are looking at the best available evidence and making a judgement on whether something should be done or take a precaution, or to say that the Panel can't find enough proof for an intervention.

Question: The Panel said they will look at whether PFAS causes cancer, which box ('it does', 'it may do', or 'it doesn't') does the new report fall into? (*This question makes reference to Carcinogenicity of perfluorooctanoic acid and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid which was published that day.* [Volume 135: Perfluorooctanoic acid and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid – IARC Monographs on the Identification of Carcinogenic Hazards to Humans \(who.int\)](#))

- Steve Hajioff commented that he had not yet read the full report in detail, but this could fall in the middle for most PFAS types. Dr Tony Fletcher from the PFAS Panel can speak in more authority on the paper on cancer.

Question: Is there an age limit for access to the service, and will we be retested for PFAS before therapeutic phlebotomy is performed?

- Steve Hajioff commented that when you donate blood there is only a benefit to others, not to you, therefore strict limits are imposed. With therapeutic phlebotomy there are benefits to the individual involved, so any risks can be offset by the benefits to the person, so for this process you could use clinical judgement. The Panel are not making strict recommendations about eligibility based on weight or age. If someone wishes to take up the service, the doctor leading the service and the individual will work together to assess whether this is the right service for the person.
- Anyone who wants to take part in the programme will have another PFAS blood test before the start the programme to assess their levels at that time, and further tests will be taken during the programme to monitor levels over time.

A further Question regarding the age limit for eligibility to access the service.

- Steve Hajioff said we need to be clear on how clinical judgement is made. The Panel recommended that many of the criteria were left to clinical judgement, except pregnancy.

Question: Ministers, can our health services cope with this, as they are already under pressure?

- The Minister for Health and Social Services (MHSS) said that this would depend on how many people need the service. There is an opportunity to work with Islanders to help design the service. We don't know the scale and scope at the moment so we can work out together how to deliver it.

Comment: Islanders feel they are being exposed on a daily basis.

- Steve Hajioff commented that there is no way to totally remove exposure and will look at the environment in report 4.

Comment: Retest all 88 to see if PFAS levels have increased.

- Steve Hajioff commented that in report 3 the Panel are looking at testing and retesting.

Question: How will you know background levels?

- Steve Hajioff said that the Panel had recommended in the report to find out the background levels and have made suggestions on how to do it, noting that the Panel are not experts on how health services work in Jersey. How and when to do it will be left to Jersey Government, although it is understood that this could be challenging.

Question: Can we speak to a doctor or nurse regarding the phlebotomy service, it is a big decision, and we want to know health effects and side effects and if it will impact on our health?

- Grace Norman said that the decision to use the service will be between individual and the clinical staff. There will be a pre-service assessment and people can have that discussion with clinical staff.
- Steve Hajioff said the Panel are looking at what clinical staff need to know to help their patients with PFAS exposure in Report 2. To note that for general information on general phlebotomy there is a chapter in report 1 which looks at risks. People can read this and see if this also helps to provide information.

Comment: An Islander mentioned that the Panel had previously commented on there being conclusive evidence for the impacts of PFAS on health in animals but not for humans.

- Steve Hajioff said that researchers use animal studies to identify areas that need research in humans and for the identification of risk, but there is not always a match between animal outcomes and human outcomes. If there are a lot of consequences for animals, researchers take this into account when they decide what to investigate with humans.

Comment: People want to understand know about cancer and hear about this new report. (*Carcinogenicity of perfluorooctanoic acid and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid* [Carcinogenicity of perfluorooctanoic acid and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid - The Lancet Oncology](#))

- Steve will ask Tony Fletcher, who is the Health Panel member in Jersey, and also one of the invited specialists for the European cancer panel, to give an overview of what the cancer report said at next week's Panel meeting on 7 December.

## General question and answers

Question: Regarding issues with the land. Is it ok for farmers to keep growing on our land without repercussions?

- The Environment Minister referred to the fact that milk and potatoes were tested in 2019 and PFOS was not found in detectable levels in these. Officers are now exploring further analysis of potatoes and soil in a UK lab and will share results when known.

Question: Landowners have been told that there are issues about their liability. PFAS causes concerns and will there be issues from farmers in the future?

- Tim du Feu commented that analysing soil and plants and their impact is an emerging science, noting that there are now accredited labs in the UK. The PFAS Panel have been asked to help review the available evidence and information on a specific question about potatoes. There have been a number of studies on plants and how they absorb different PFAS.
- Steve Hajioff said the Panel will look at these issues in report 4 and Panel are looking into it briefly now due to the question about potatoes.

Question: Concerns about PFAS levels in the sea and the impact on fish and crustaceans. Are these being tested for PFAS?

- Steve Hajioff said the Panel will consider the need to assess PFAS in fish and crustaceans in report 4 and will make recommendations as appropriate. Steve noted that PFAS in the sea is an international issue, rather than just a local issue.

Comment: An Islander expressed concern around the level of environmental contamination.

- Tim du Feu commented on the previous testing of biota; results showed low detection of PFAS both for marine life close to the sewage treatment works (in St Aubin's bay) and from St Ouen's Bay. There is ongoing water testing in Pont Marquet and St Ouens. Arcadis will produce a report with the results of their water testing and modelling work on the St Ouen's Bay and Pont Marquet plumes as part of the hydrogeological survey.
- The Chief Minister said thanks to the Panel we are considering these aspects. We are at the forefront and leading globally on some of this work. We will review the evidence and see how to proceed.
- The Chief Minister also appreciated people's frustration on the time it has taken to get to this point.

Question: Regarding water testing for the hydrogeological survey, should it be a third party collecting the water for testing to remove the risk of bias in sample collection.

- Tim du Feu explained that it is the Government of Jersey Natural Environment team who are collecting water samples, rather than Jersey Water, and it is appropriate that the environment team be involved in this work.
- Officers went out to tender to design the work and the company selected who are overseeing this work - Arcadis - are experienced in PFAS and have done work in Guernsey and across the globe.
- Sampling techniques are now highly advanced, they use medical grade pumps and PFAS free tubes to avoid any risk of contamination of samples.

Comment: An Islander asked whether people are happy they have PFAS in their blood. They wanted to show the strength of feeling in the room. He asked people in the room to raise their hands.

Question: Why did it take until 2005 for Government to tell Islanders to stop drinking water, when government knew of the potential harms many years earlier? The PFAS manufacturer had said the foam was dangerous. Why will government not be honest?

- The Chief Minister commented that the current Ministers were not involved at that time and have not seen the information that the Islander is referring to.

Question: The settlement with the States of Jersey, some of this documentation could be seen in States Greffe. Why can't we see all this information? Chemical companies told the States untruths in this settlement. The Islander referred to examples in other countries. We understood the States had to report any legal claims to the manufacturer and is this true?

- The Chief Minister said she and her Ministers are not aware of the contents of the document described, have not seen it and cannot comment.

Question: Is the Attorney General in contact with the PFAS manufacturer? Trust in government is low.

- The Chief Minister did not know and said they would endeavour to provide some information.
- Steve Hajioff confirmed that the PFAS Panel is not communicating with any PFAS manufacturers.

Comment: I can't have my grandchildren round to visit due to PFOS in the bore hole and garden.

- Tim du Feu commented that this household is included in the Arcadis study sampling programme, and the data received will then be assessed to provide further information.

Comment: The memorandum for the Ports of Jersey says that they are responsible for mains water but no responsibility for health.

- That is correct.

Question: Are the Ports no longer part of the States?

- The Chief Minister confirmed that the Ports is an arm's length body to have more independence but are still owned by the Government of Jersey.

Comment: An Islander was upset about the PFAS in their blood.

- The Chief Minister said she could see the level of anxiety in people and understood that this is really challenging for people.

Question: Why is Jersey following the Drinking Water Inspectorate levels for mains water? These are for England and Wales, and the US recently dropped their levels. Water pumped into the reservoir from the plume was at a higher level to dilute it. Significant difference in what they want in US and what the levels are here. PFAS accumulates in pipework.

- Steve Hajjoff commented that the EPA – Environmental Protection Agency - in the USA have said it is a *strategic intent* to lower the threshold and this is not yet enforced. The Panel's report 2 will explore where PFAS accumulates in body and report 4 will look at where it accumulates in environment.
- Tim du Feu commented that the 2 bore holes in the plume area are now closed and are not in use.

Question: Reverse osmosis filters are used at the desalination plant; how are the waste filters disposed of?

- This would be a question for waste management.
- Steve Hajjoff mentioned the Panel could look at this in report 4.

## **Closing remarks**

Ministers recognised the level of anxiety and stress amongst those present and appreciate that this is a challenging time for many involved.

The Chief Minister said that she hoped to have answered Islanders questions and anything outstanding can be picked up at the next meeting. The PFAS Panel have more work to do, and Ministers look forward to receiving their future reports.



The Chief Minister asked Islanders if they were happy with the choice of venue, as none of the community venues were available. The response was yes people were happy with the venue.

Islanders were thanked for their input and attendance. The government officers were also thanked for their work in supporting this work and organising the event.

The meeting was then closed.