

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY DEPUTY J.A. HILTON OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 2nd FEBRUARY 2016**

Question

Given the previous failings of the 'Corporate Parent' to address issues involving children, can the Minister explain how handing the political lead for children to another group, in the form of the Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy Group, fulfils the role and requirements outlined in the Williamson report R.8/2009?

Answer

In his report, Andrew Williamson recognised 'the perceived confusion about the purpose, effectiveness and overall accountability of the then Children's Executive and Corporate Parent' and recommended that consideration be given to the creation of the post of Minister for Children. However, at the time, he also observed that 'the role of Minister for Children could create some confusion in relation to the responsibilities of other significant Ministries.'

In May 2013, the then Children's Policy Group (which had been established in 2010 to replace the Corporate Parent) reviewed whether or not consideration should be given to the creation of a Children's Minister and invited Andrew Williamson to comment. He stated that: 'Since 2008, considerable progress has been made on a whole range of fronts with regard to improving child protection arrangements and to increasing the effectiveness of policy and decision making structures, not least through the establishment of the Children's Policy Group (CPG). As such, I am now of the view that the potential disbenefits of creating a Minister for Children will most likely outweigh the benefits of so doing. The CPG is a viable and effective alternative to a Minister for Children within Jersey's small Island jurisdiction.'

In June 2015, the Children's Policy Group and the Adults Policy Group merged to form the Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy Group (CAVA). The purpose of CAVA is to provide robust political leadership and co-ordination across, and amongst, States Departments and States-funded services that impact on, benefit, or protect children or vulnerable adults (of working age or post-retirement age). Nonetheless, this does not negate the duty of all States Members to safeguard vulnerable children and adults.

CAVA has made a commitment to consider any recommendations that might arise from the Jersey Care Inquiry in relation to the appropriateness of a Minister for Children.

CAVA responsibilities, which are formally designated to it by the Council of Ministers, include:

- to provide political oversight with regard to safeguarding:
 - formally receive the Serious Case Reviews (SCR) commissioned and undertaken by the Safeguarding Partnership Boards (SPB), in order to:
 - a. consider and adopt relevant recommendations
 - b. working in partnership with the SPB to oversee and monitor delivery of recommendations
 - c. reporting SCR findings and recommendations to Council of Ministers (COM) as appropriate.
 - formally receive the Annual Report and business plan of the SPB prior to presentation to COM and publication

- to advise and support relevant Ministers on policy and legislative matters in order to facilitate a joined up approach with regard to children and vulnerable adults. This will include providing political oversight and lead for all key activities/strategies with particular focus on:
 - Safeguarding
 - Legal and policy matters relating to the family
 - Children and Young People’s Strategic Framework
 - 1001 Days/Early Help
 - UNCRC
 - Building a Safer Society Strategy (BASS)
 - Disability strategy
 - Relevant international conventions, as determined by the Ministers
 - Violence against women and girls – Istanbul Convention
 - Others, as delegated, by COM, or as determined by individual Ministers.

- to work pro-actively with each other, other Departments, States-funded services, Parochial Authorities, and other external organisations, to help ensure the provision of cohesive, effective services

- to provide strategic advice to the Council of Ministers and States Assembly on matters relating to those children and adults including their families/carers

- to advise and contribute to propositions to the States Assembly, and the formal consultation processes, in order to ensure that the impact on children and adults is taken into account.

This does not include making decisions on operational or funding matters which are the responsibility of the Executive.

Whilst the Ministers will act collaboratively to discharge their responsibilities, each Minister retains their own statutory obligations as set out in Law. The following Ministers are members of CAVA:

Assistant Chief Minister (Chair)
 Minister for Health and Social Services
 Minister for Home Affairs
 Minister for Housing
 Minister for Social Security
 Minister for Education