

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND HOUSING
BY DEPUTY L.M.C. DOUBLET OF ST. SAVIOUR
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 2nd NOVEMBER 2020**

Question

Will the Minister advise how he is ensuring all children with the capacity to understand that smacking is not permitted by law are educated and informed about this in a child-friendly way; and will he explain what avenues exist for children to report any such behaviour and how are they informed of these avenues and given opportunities to make a disclosure?

Answer

Jersey put in place a public awareness-raising campaign called “Stop Smacking – Seek Support” and also provided guidance and support to practitioners working with children across the Island. This placed an emphasis on the importance of positive parenting techniques.

Staff in Jersey in Government and in other sectors working with children have been receiving training in the Jersey Practice Framework – ‘Jersey’s Children First’ which places great import on; putting the child at the centre, assessing need, professionals taking and being allocated responsibility for a child who requires support and working as a team around the child. Staff are aware of how to raise issues if they are concerned about a child’s welfare. This means that any child can speak to any member of staff about a concern they have, and that staff member will know how to progress that issue.

Schools

Within the Government of Jersey schools, children, staff, parents and carers, and members of the wider community are working together to understand and promote the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Working together, all Jersey schools are expected to promote the idea that children have rights that will help them to develop, survive and participate in their community whilst being protected from harm. In addition, the children are also expected to develop a keen awareness of their responsibilities in upholding the rights of others in society. Thus, the rights of individual children are actively promoted in Jersey schools.

Through the process becoming an accredited Rights Respecting School, various PSHE programmes, school councils, assemblies, pastoral programmes and published policies, both the children and parents and carers know what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

The creation of a culture whereby the voice of the child is at the heart of the school means that there is a strong encouragement for children to raise concerns with school staff. The creation of the Rights Respecting School Charter means that all adults working in schools know that if a child raises a personal issue, such as smacking, the matter will be treated seriously, confidentially and responsibly. If such a matter arises, the school is expected to respond appropriately and include the various professionals from the designated lead to children’s services.

Youth Service and Youth Enquiry Service

When the Law on smacking ban of children came into force the Youth Enquiry Service run a news article on the new law on the YES website, as well as a display in the YES window on the issue.

There is a section on the YES website called "Knowing your rights" which has a section on Smacking – it explains the law, why smacking is banned, support available and how to get help. There are also posters in English, Polish and Portuguese.

The information on the website is written by youth workers and all information is presented in a child friendly way.

These posters are also on display in youth clubs.

Children's Safeguarding

There are advocacy and children's rights services who work with looked after children who focus on ensuring that children and young people are aware of their rights and supported to raise issues or who advocate on their behalf. There is also provision for advocacy services delivery by a third sector organisation to children within the child protection system. This provision will be extended to children in need in 2021.

Getting help

The Children and Families Hub is an important foundation to responding to children who need support. It provides a single point of contact and referral for children, young people and families who require additional support to ensure they are appropriately supported, safeguarded and protected.

The launch was accelerated to the 23 March 2020 in recognition of the importance of having an accessible front door for members of the public at a time of reduced visibility of children and heightened challenges for families coping with the consequences of the covid-19 pandemic.

Contacts can be made by both members of the public and professionals by telephone, email or through the electronic forms accessed through the [Children and Families Hub web page](#).

There has been a significant communication work done to publicise the Hub and its role in supporting children, young people and families much of this in child friendly language and format.

If contacts reach threshold for a social care response, the MASH Decision Maker determines next steps which may be direct referral to Children's Social Work or multi-agency research to inform the appropriate response and outcome.

MASH is no longer the front door for support but sits behind the triage and will only deal with those children who require a social work service or may need protection/safeguarding.

The Children and Families Hub has established a single place that families can go to for help which is non-stigmatising. It encourages families to proactively seek support as soon as a problem emerges. In May, an online information directory of services was added to the Children and Families Hub webpage to help families find the right help locally. It was designed based on research done with Jersey parents to meet their needs. Currently, there are over 70 services in the Directory and new services will continue to be added.

Any issues raised by the new legislation are dealt with by the Children and Families Hub where the appropriate support can be offered, or protection provided where appropriate. The MASH process will continue to investigate matters where a child may have suffered or be at risk of significant harm.

Since the change in legislation, contacts have been recorded in the hub in relation to 27 families where there were concerns about possible physical abuse. The responses have been proportionate to each family's needs and backgrounds. For some families this would have meant being supported by Early Help and for others, where the risk was deemed to be significant, they would have been referred to Children's Social Care for investigation and response. Data is not specifically collected in relation to smacking - this is captured within a wider category of physical abuse.