

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHIEF MINISTER
BY DEPUTY R.J. WARD OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 4th FEBRUARY 2020**

Question

What research is being undertaken or funded by the Government to investigate the effects of income inequality in Jersey on educational outcomes, physical health, mental health and other long-term societal pressures?

Answer

A key report, Jersey Better Life Index – 2019, into overall wellbeing and the factors that drive outcomes will be published on 14 February 2020 by Statistics Jersey. Over the last decade there has been a drive globally to move away from purely economic measures, such as GDP, as the sole indicators of a nation's well-being and progress. Approaches which draw on social and environmental, as well as economic, factors are now a common international objective. This latest report, for 2019, is intended to be the first in a series of annual updates of the Jersey Better Life Index. The Better Life Index is based on 11 "dimensions" of well-being: income; jobs and earnings; housing; health status; work-life balance; education and skills; community; civic engagement; environmental quality; personal safety; and life satisfaction.

In addition, a range of government projects are underway which aim to reduce income inequality or the effects of income inequality. These projects range across many different initiatives and include elements of formal and informal research into the effects of income inequality. Key examples of Government Plan commitments in this area where work is underway include:

- Good progress is being made to deliver a Health and Wellbeing Framework. The framework will outline new ways of working together across government on the prevention agenda, to achieve better health and wellbeing outcomes. One of the new approaches being developed through the framework is a 'Jersey Needs Assessment', which will bring together both existing and new data into one place to better identify needs and to target services accordingly. The needs assessment approach is currently being piloted with a focus on children and young people with the intention to complete the first data set report in March.
- Statistics Jersey started the fieldwork for the five-yearly Living Costs and Household Income Survey (LCHIS, formerly the Household Income and Spending Survey) in July 2019. The fieldwork is conducted over a period of twelve months and will be completed in June 2020. The report on the income distribution of Jersey households is anticipated to be published around the end of 2020. The results of this survey will provide updated measures of income inequality in the Island, overall and broken down by, for example, household type, tenure, income level, employment status, residential status, as well as changes in the income distribution and income inequality over the last two decades. The results will form the basis of research underpinning evidence-based policy development relating to, for example, social security benefits and fiscal policy, including the distributional effects of consumption taxes and user-pay charges.
- The current approach taken by Adult Mental Health Services is that mental health disorders are complex multi-level phenomena and their full understanding calls for the integration of multiple disciplines and perspectives. The service takes a multi-agency approach involving social workers, psychologists, occupational therapists, psychiatrists and psychiatric nurses.

The service does not work in isolation and is impacted upon by wider community issues. An example of this is the multi-agency work done to secure employment; the work available is determined by the

wider social context. The fact that mental health is everyone's business is reflected in (for example) the finding that 'hopelessness and a difficulty in imagining solutions, which are also risk factors for suicidal behaviour, are influenced by both neighbourhood culture and the physical environment' (Friedli 2009 p25). The World Health Organisation states that certain population subgroups are at higher risk of mental health problems because of greater exposure and vulnerability to unfavourable social, economic, and environmental circumstances. These intersect with factors such as gender, ethnicity and disability. These factors are teased out at an individual level by highly trained support staff within the Adult Mental Health service.

The resources of the Adult Mental Health Service are focused on meeting the needs of people who present with acute and complex issues. We are however continually working on improving systems, data collection and reporting to allow population analysis of the level of mental health issues in our community. We aim to contribute to the second stage of the development of the Government Plan commitment to deliver a Health and Wellbeing Framework which will include a 'Jersey Needs Assessment'.

- The effects of income inequality on educational outcomes are well known worldwide and in Jersey and Jersey Premium funding is already proving effective in starting to close the attainment gap. Jersey Premium is a targeted funding programme for schools which was introduced in January 2017 following a pilot phase in 2016. The funding is available to all school children who have ever been looked after, pupils from households who have recently claimed income support and pupils from households with 'registered' status who would qualify for income support if they had lived in the Island for five years.

Over the past three years, the proportion of pupils in receipt of Jersey Premium, assessed as Secure in reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 2, has increased at a greater rate than those pupils not in receipt of Jersey Premium. Jersey Premium funding is being increased within the Government Plan and its scope has been widened to ensure that funding can also be targeted towards schools and colleges with eligible 16 - 19-year-old students.

All relevant education attainment reports now contain separate statistics for the Jersey Premium eligible students, so we can track the effect on outcomes.

- A project group is investigating the development of a model to support access to primary care for financially vulnerable individuals.
- An independent review of financial independence in old age is underway, including an examination of the income levels experienced in old age.
- The Housing Policy Development Board has overseen research into rental levels and the level of rental stress experienced by private sector tenants as part of its broad review of housing provision.
- Fieldwork is planned to start in February in respect of the additional household costs experienced by families that include someone who has long term care needs.