

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND EDUCATION
BY DEPUTY M.R. SCOTT OF ST. BRELADE
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 5th JUNE 2023
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 12th JUNE 2023**

Question

“Will the Minister advise –

- (a) the dates on which she became aware of the Inspection Reports (or any of the expected content thereof) on the three Unregistered Children’s Homes published by the Jersey Care Commission and dated 13th January 2023 and 17th February 2023; and
- (b) what specific actions, if any, she is either undertaking or supporting to ensure that the following cultural problems within Government, that were identified in the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry Report, are being transparently addressed within the Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department, namely –
 - (i) failures to manage conflicts of interest;
 - (ii) the lack of a culture of openness and transparency;
 - (iii) a silo mentality among public-sector agencies, States departments and institutions characterised by territorialism and protectiveness rather than openness to pooling resources and learning; and
 - (iv) that parts of the community feel that politicians and States employees cannot be trusted and that abusive practices have been covered up?”

Answer

(a) 10th February 2023 I received a copy of two inspection reports from the Chief Inspector of the Jersey Care commission. The third report was received by me on 16th May 2023.

(b) Within the first 100 days the Chief Minister identified her Office as the point of responsibility for the continued response and learning from the Care Inquiry. This was emphasised further by a commitment to the establish the role of a Public Sector Ombudsman.

As the Minister for Children and Education I would point to the following actions as examples of ways in which my Ministerial Team continue to apply the lessons of the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry.

(i) As a previous member of Scrutiny and Public Accounts Committee I know how politically important it is to engage with the Assemblies Scrutiny process as a way of publicly showing the challenges in public service. I remain committed to engaging with the Children Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel at the earliest opportunity throughout the development of policy and service transformation.

(ii) The States Assembly passed the new Children and Young People (Jersey) Law 2022 which is expected to be implemented later this year. There are new duties which focus on the ‘duty to co-operate’ across agencies and services and in enshrining in law the role of the Corporate parents for looked after children and care leavers. The statutory guidance for the above law is almost complete and has been guided by a local expert group made up of professionals across the range of services for children.

I propose to commission an independent third party to carry out a survey of our looked after children and care leavers. The organisation is professionally credible and linked to a well respected university and uses the survey across England and Wales. It is intended the survey will run in the autumn and will be repeated in three years time.

As Minister for Children - a political office created after the Care Inquiry - I have been particularly pleased to establish a set of [Participation Standards for children and young people \(gov.je\)](https://www.gov.je/participation-standards) which I'm delighted to announce are being used across Government and other organisations who now will have guidelines and toolkits on how to engage effectively and meaningfully with children and young people. A key feature of this Council of Ministers has been to establish constituency surgeries to listen to and understand the views Islanders. In addition to playing an active part in this initiative, I have also championed the need for a new cultural diversity network which, based at Jersey Library, is now working to engage those parts of the community who previously did not have a voice and will lead to the development of a Cultural Centre

The Children, Young People Education and Skills Department was set up in 2018 with the aim of bringing services together which delivered services to children, young people and families with a range of needs in universal, targeted and specialist services.

In Jersey we have developed a practice model – Jersey's Children First for use by all services working with children, young people and families. This model sets out expectations about how services support children and families, and includes toolkits for staff, arrangements for the lead worker for a child and a team around the family model. Information sharing expectations and escalation routes are explicit.

Good participation of children and young people goes beyond just giving them a voice. It is a process that includes children and young people from start to finish. It involves children and young people being actively listened to and supported to express their views. These views should have a genuine influence on policy development and children should receive feedback after they take the time to share their views.

(iii) As the Minister for Children and Education I know that other Ministerial Departments have an influence on children and their families. I continually engage with other Ministers through [Ministerial Groups](#) on policy matters relating to Skills, Corporate Parenting and Children's Safeguarding. These Ministerial Groups are established to advise the responsible Minister as they make decisions in their areas of responsibility, usually to support prominent areas of policy development or oversight of major projects.

(iv) It is important that there continues to be independent checks and balances across the children's system which hold Government to account. My department continues to play their part in engaging with both the Care Regulator and the Office of the Children's Commissioner whilst at the same time engaging every day with children and families who are sometimes at their most vulnerable.

In 2023 The Jersey Care Commission expands the range and number of services which will be subject to regular scrutiny and inspection. Inspection reports are all published on the Commission's website.

Last week the UK State Party, which included Jersey, received the Concluding Observations Report from the UN Committee. I have already discussed the Report with the Children's Commissioner. The UN Committee assessment was the result of an 18-month process contributed to by UK Government departments, Civil Society including Children's Commissioners and is an example of deliberate engagement encouraged by the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry. #

I have personal surgeries at least once a month where I welcome attendance from any Islanders. Additionally, the Council of Ministers now have a monthly surgery where Islanders can come and speak direct to Ministers about anything of concern.