

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE CHIEF MINISTER
ON MONDAY 9th APRIL 2017**

**Implementation of ‘United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:
Compliance of Draft Laws and Training of States of Jersey Employees’ (P.63/2017)**

In the week following the publication of the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry, this Assembly debated and supported a proposition from Deputy Doublet, which challenged us to do more to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child¹².

Part of the Deputy’s proposition required me, as Chief Minister, to update Members on the progress we have made on this work, and today I am pleased to be able to do so.

From my discussions with the Children’s Commissioner we both agree more needs to be done to put the consideration of children’s rights at the centre of our government and our public services.

The Care Inquiry was very clear that, in the past, we failed to consider the welfare of our children in everything we do. In my recent visit to Scotland, I heard first-hand how the ‘paramountcy’ of the child was being hard-wired into developing children’s policy and legislation. Full incorporation of the convention is seen as the logical next step.

We don’t need to look far to see how other countries have embraced this task. Spain, Norway and Iceland have all fully incorporated the UN Convention into their legislation. It is clear to me that incorporation will help us achieve the cultural change we need, if we are to make our Island the best possible place for children to grow up in.

The Children’s Commissioner has invited a leading academic on children’s rights and the law to help us develop our approach to incorporation. Dr Simon Hoffman is from Swansea University and is a member of the Welsh Government’s Children’s Rights Advisory Group³. He will be speaking to Members later this week and I look forward to this valuable opportunity to shape our approach to this important issue.

I am pleased to report that work is progressing on a proposition requiring ministers to assess the impact on children’s rights⁴ of every new law and regulation. With the support of the Greffe and the Privileges and Procedures Committee, I hope that a proposition can be brought forward early in the new Assembly’s term.

It is important that the initiatives proposed by Deputy Doublet, and agreed by Members, are not seen in isolation.

¹ In September 2017 States Assembly agreed P63/2017 ‘United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Compliance of Draft Laws and Training of the States of Jersey Employees’

² <http://www.statesassembly.gov.je/assemblypropositions/2017/p.63-2017.pdf>

³ Dr Hoffman will provide a briefing session to State Members on Thursday 12th April and will describe different models of incorporation implemented in other jurisdictions both in the United and Kingdom and internationally. He will also be delivering a workshop on April 13th to Officers and representatives from the third sector.

⁴ Following agreement with the States Assembly Greffe, work is in progress to draft an amendment to the Standing Orders in order to give effect to all elements of part (b) of P63/2017. This amendment will be brought before the Privileges and Procedures Committee in due course

Our response to the Care Inquiry recommendations will also help us to embed children's rights into the heart of our community. The key foundations for transformation are now in place. We have set up a system of independent inspection of Children's Services; we have established a Children's Commissioner with direct access to the States Assembly; and our plans to create one government, with integrated services for children, will smash the silo-working that has served children and families so poorly in the past.

A proposition recently lodged by the Privileges and Procedures Committee lists, for the first time, the specific duties we all bear as Corporate Parents⁵. This work, along with the initiatives in Deputy Doublet's proposition is directly relevant to article 4 of the Convention, which tackles the way government supports and protects children rights.

In recent years, we have made significant investment in services for children and young people, demonstrating our commitment to their welfare and their rights. The establishment of the Sexual Assault Referral Centre, enhancements to the Youth Enquiry Service and the new school-based Early Help Service are all designed to respond to specific articles in the UN Convention.

Sir, I hope Members recognise that this work, and this investment, demonstrates commitment, from both the Children's Commissioner and this government, to implementing Deputy Doublet's proposals. In doing so, we will continue our progress towards placing the rights of children and young people at the heart of Government.