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Deputy Louise Doublet
Vice-Chair, Children, Education and Home Affairs Panel
Lead Member for the Review

BY EMAIL

10 May 2022

Dear Vice-Chair,

Covid-19 Response: Impact on Children and Young People - Report Response

We would like to thank and congratulate the Panel and all the stakeholders who gave evidence, as their combined efforts and input have ensured a detailed analysis of many issues, important to the Island and particularly it's children.

We are pleased to see the Panel note:

“Ensuring children’s learning was maintained throughout the pandemic has been a strength of the Government of Jersey’s response and the Panel would commend all those who have ensured this has continued”

And also, the Panel’s tribute to all the front-line staff who have ensured children are able to continue their education, socialise with their peers and develop in as ‘normal’ a way as possible throughout this difficult period. We would like to add and re-affirm the Government’s tribute to all front-line staff across Government services, the charitable and third sectors and the private sector. It was a whole Island approach and dedication to duty by so many, that allowed impacts on lives and livelihoods to be minimised.

You have requested a full response to the report within 4 weeks to a deadline of 6 May 2022, acknowledging this is less than the agreed 6-week timescale.

The Panel has made 19 recommendations which we agree do provide constructive assistance and feedback on the response up until September 2021. However, several of the recommendations seek to commit Ministers to deliver actions and strategies that can only reasonably be answered by the incoming Ministers of the next government.

The Codes of Conduct and Practice for Ministers and Assistant Ministers (gov.je) (“Ministerial Code”) provides guidance for the responsibilities retained by Ministers and Assistant Ministers during the election period:

During an election period (normally being between the nomination meetings and the election of the last Minister into office), Ministers retain executive responsibilities, and the essential business of government must be carried on. However, they should observe discretion in initiating any new action of a continuing or long-term character; and decisions on matters of policy on which a new Council or Minister might be expected to want the opportunity to take a different view should be postponed

where possible, provided that such postponement would not be detrimental to the Island's best interests or wasteful of resources.

It would not be appropriate for us to make commitments now on future strategy development and timelines, nor on what items will be included in the next Government Plan. Additionally, the Easter holiday period has predictably arrived with a high level of officer absence which has reduced our ability to fully consider the report, it's many findings and recommendations.

For the reasons above, we feel that expediting a response within 4 weeks will not do justice to the work of the Panel, nor their advisors and all who gave evidence through the various formats, particularly the children. The Panel's work has taken 14 months to complete, is detailed and comprehensive. A response in 4 weeks that cannot commit future Ministers would be at the cost of the quality, research and commitment the Government should put into responding. We believe this would be a disservice to the Panel and all those who contributed to the Report and trust you would agree.

We will ensure that officers prioritise their review of the report and provide the appropriate advice to the incoming Ministers as soon as the new Council is formed. A full response from the incoming Ministers will of course take much longer, but it will enable a much more considered response that is able to make long lasting commitments on the Panel's recommendations where appropriate.

We are in full agreement with the Panel that from the evidence received, the Government of Jersey has clearly strived to do the best for children and young people in especially trying circumstances. I want to ensure that we continue to strive to do the best and that is why a full response from the incoming Ministers will produce a legacy of the Panel's thorough and informative report.

Yours sincerely,



Deputy Scott Wickenden
Minister for Children and Education



Senator John Le Fondré
Chief Minister