

19-21 Broad Street | St Helier
Jersey | JE2 3RR

Deputy Catherine Curtis
Chair, Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

22 March 2024

Dear Chair

Follow-up matters from the Public Hearing on 7th March 2024

Thank you for writing to me on 5th March with a range of questions following our most recent Public Hearing. I am pleased to provide the answers below and would be happy to provide further information if required.

During the hearing you committed to follow up with:

- **Confirmation of Ministerial responsibility for online safety; and**

Online safety is a societal issue that affects Islanders of all ages. Responsibility will need to be shared across several Ministers. Legislative aspects will likely fall under the Minister for Sustainable Economic development, education in schools the Minister for education and Lifelong Learning etc. As Minister for Children and Families I am committed to supporting any improvements we can make to online safety for all.

- **Data in relation to school absences.**

The data for the % of children with attendance below 90% (persistent absence) for the last three years is shown below. This includes children in all mainstream schools from reception to year 11 but excludes the Summer term for year 11 pupils. It is calculated using am attendance. Events leading to school closures such as Storm Ciaran, Covid-19 and teacher strikes have been excluded.

2022-2023 16.9%

2021-2022 26.2%

2020-2021 12.2%

The department is currently focussing on raising school attendance and has recently started to monitor those students on a part-time timetable.

Below is the data for the Autumn term for the current year 2023-24

2023-2024 18.1%

Youth Centre

1. The Panel heard during its hearing in December that there was a possibility for CAMHS, the YES service, and the Jersey Music Service to be provided with a combined location. Please can you advise the Panel if this is still under consideration?

Officers continue to review all options for providing improved accommodation for CYPES services. We are still in the exploratory phase at this stage but would be happy to update the Panel once further information is available, including possible location and make up of future premises.

2. The Panel would be interested to know what funding has been, or will be, allocated for acquiring additional youth-service facilities in St. Helier, or enhancing existing facilities?

Funding is available in the Government plan for enhancing youth-service facilities at Le Squez and St Aubin's Fort. There is currently no funding allocated to additional youth-service facilities in St Helier. However, Officers in CYPES will explore how a worked-up scheme on an identified site could be included into the Capital Plan through ongoing discussions with Treasury colleagues.

Safeguarding / vetting

3. In August last year the Panel wrote to the former Minister about the Government's Safe Recruitment Policy for individuals who work with children, and we learnt that the policy was scheduled to be updated in 2024, although the last substantive review had not taken place since 2017. Please can you advise whether that policy review has started and whether it is likely to include any significant updates or changes?

The review of the Safer Recruitment Policy began in December 2023, consultation has taken place with key stakeholders including the Trade Unions, the Jersey Appointments Commission, the People Hub and various Professional bodies. A final draft of the policy is due to be released 28 March 2024.

Changes include:

Policy includes requirement for DBS clearances, will include links to guidance on eligibility for standard and enhanced, using the gov.uk site, which aligns with legislation

Alignment to other policies within GoJ;

Alignment to managing allegations policy, linking in with Jersey Designated Officers;

Revising elements of the policy to align to the new talent acquisition system

Alignment with revised recruitment policy on reference checking for regulated roles

Modernisation of policy for ID verification, checking and overall DBS procedure

Enhanced pre-employment checks

Requirement to join the DBS update service

4. You confirmed that the Government would publish a list of updated ministerial responsibilities. Please could you confirm when that report will be published? [For clarity, this refers to the list of Ministerial Responsibilities published under Article 30A of the States of Jersey Law 2005, the previous version was published as R.10/2023].

The updated Article 30A report is near finalisation and I understand is aimed to be published as soon as possible before the next Assembly sitting on the 16th April.

I have no expectation within that of substantial change in the areas for which I am now responsible.

To aid, I attach for information below in the appendix a copy of the Chief Minister's nomination statement for the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning. This was previously circulated to all States Members via email on 26th February.

5. In relation to the UK's Online Safety Act, it was mentioned that "There was a decision not to be included under the U.K. legislation back in 2022". Please could you provide some more information about how that decision was made and where the decision was recorded?

At the time the UK requested Jersey's permission to include a Permissive Extent Clause in the Online Safety Act, a review of the UK legislation and corresponding Jersey law was undertaken. The analysis was that if Jersey wanted to legislate for the same purposes, then this can be addressed locally. Jersey has a strong reputation for developing relevant and appropriate local legislation. Jersey is considering developments to its own local legislation to reflect the digital harms, alongside incorporating recommendations from the Violence Against Women and Girls Task Force. The current relationship between Ofcom and Jersey, is clear and supportive in the relevant policy spaces.

6. During the hearing it was confirmed that the retention payments provided to substantive social workers was helping the stability of that workforce. Please could you provide the Panel with some more information around the retention payments made to Children's Social Workers.

Funding had been secured in the Government Plan 2022 to support a retention fee for Social Workers and to prevent social workers from leaving front line services. The value of payment was for £5000 as a single subsidy which is repayable should the employee leave employment within a fixed period.

The lack of social workers has the following impacts:

1. Impact on quality of support, intervention and care
2. Consistency of social worker supporting children, young people and families
3. Quality of risk assessment
4. Start again syndrome in assessment and intervention
5. Loss of organisational memory

There are pressing and urgent issue for Government in continuing to accept the implications of difficulties in recruiting professional qualified and registered social workers to discharge statutory duties and responsibilities to children on behalf of the Minister. This issue has been pressing for a number of years, has been highlighted in several external reports and scrutiny e.g. the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry and Ofsted.

A short-term package of measures was needed to address the immediate retention issues and to improve our ability to recruit and retain professional and qualified people, thus improving team capacity, evidencing our commitment to the service to both the Island and the Service and improving services to service user's short term. The department sought investment for urgent resource to assist with recruitment of agency staff where permanent staff cannot currently be recruited and to provide a loyalty/retention payment for current permanent staff to prevent further resignations and staff moving to other social care roles in the island.

Yours sincerely,



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Appendix

On 13 February 2024, the Chief Minister presented a Report to the States Assembly with a copy of the Order 14 days before it would be made, which would be on 27 February 2024 to enabling States Members to appoint to the new Ministerial Office at the scheduled sitting that same day.ⁱ

In the intervening period between the formation of the Council of Ministers and the creation of the new Ministerial Offices, Constable Vibert, with the consent of the Chief Minister,ⁱⁱ appointed Deputies Alves, Ferey, and R. Ward as Assistant Ministers to reflect those States Members that would hold roles in the new Ministerial Offices.ⁱⁱⁱ

Chief Minister's Nominee

The Chief Minister nominates Deputy R. Ward of St Helier Central for the Ministerial Office of 'Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning' and following the separation, and in addition to the legislation outlined within the Order to establish the Ministerial Office,^{iv} they will be responsible for:

See table below for detail of what each directorate includes:

Children's Social Care	Integrated Services	Young People's Services	Chief Officer Directorate	Education	Library Service	Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice & Support team MASH Family group conferencing Family intervention service Complex Needs Fostering & Adoption Short Breaks Residential Care Quality & Standards Leaving Care Learning & Development Children in care Independent reviewing service Peer mentoring Trainee Social Work pathway Jersey Designated Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Help (Right Help, Right Time) Best Start Centres Family & Community support service Children & Families Hub CAMHS Neurodevelopmental Service Early Intervention Specialist CAMHS Duty & Assessment Service Children in Care CAMHS Quality & Assurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jersey Youth Service Jersey Youth Parliament LGBTQ Youth Young Carers Outdoor Learning Youth Enquiry Service Multi-lingual Youth Street Youth Work Youth Arts Inclusion Youth Project 12 Parish Youth Projects Integrated Intensive Youth Support Contextual Safeguarding/Exploitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Support Governance Health & Safety Risk Digital Informatics Programme & Projects Transformation, Commissioning and Partnerships Partnerships & Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools & Colleges School Improvement & Advisory Service Jersey School Review Framework Curriculum Development Teaching & Learning Assessment & Modernisation Early Years Quality Assurance and Development Childcare Registration, Regulation & Review Early Years Inclusion Team- Portage and pre-school support Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Psychology and Wellbeing Initial Teacher Training Leadership Development Teacher's Professional Development Inclusion Schools & Colleges Languages Policy & MLL SEM HIT Education Welfare Virtual School ASCIT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobile Library Communicare Library Open Learning IT Centre Maker Space School Resource department House & Home delivery service Reading Information, Digital & Learning Culture & Creativity Health & Wellbeing Enterprise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careers Guidance Skills gap analysis & prediction Skills Mentoring Skills funding administration Careers and Skills events

ⁱ See 'Notice Under Article 29a(3) of the States of Jersey Law 2005: Changes to Ministerial Offices' (R.23/2024), presented by the Chief Minister, 13 February 2024, States Assembly ([link](#)). Accessed February 2024.

ⁱⁱ See MD-CM-2024-39, Government of Jersey ([link](#)) & MD-CM-2024-50, Government of Jersey ([link](#)). Links accessed February 2024.

ⁱⁱⁱ See MD-CED-2024-38, Government of Jersey ([link](#)) & MD-CED-2024-48, Government of Jersey ([link](#)). Links accessed February 2024.

^{iv} See page 4 of the 'Notice Under Article 29a(3) of the States of Jersey Law 2005: Changes to Ministerial Offices' (R.23/2024), presented by the Chief Minister, 13 February 2024, States Assembly ([link](#)). Accessed February 2024.