



Patron, Lady Dalton

Deputy Inna Gardiner  
Chair  
Public Accounts Committee  
By Email; [scrutiny@gov.je](mailto:scrutiny@gov.je)

Dear Deputy Gardiner

### **Jersey Child Care Trust's Response to PAC's Review into the Government Covid-19 Response**

As a direct result of the Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Trust was able to access the Government's Salary Co-Funding Scheme between April and August 2020. Whilst it was fairly easy to navigate the application process for this scheme, it was not designed with charities in mind. Proving our monthly income (compared to 2019's) had dropped below the threshold required was quite difficult – our grants and donations (our main source of income) are paid to us in varied forms – annually, quarterly, monthly and at a variety of times. There didn't seem to be much allowance made for the nature of our organisation. Other sources of income – funding groups and individuals were able to respond to our sector's needs in a much more agile way.

The wider implications for the children and families we work with are much more significant and ongoing. Some children (those of key worker families or those with special educational needs and disabilities) were able to access their nursery setting throughout, supported by our Special Needs Support Workers. Our Special Needs Support Workers worked throughout supporting children and families – not only providing one to one support to the children attending but also in supporting families as more and more children returned to nursery. Working with others (CEYS, Childcare Providers, Early Years Inclusion Team) we helped ensure those children who needed to access their setting could do so. However, the Government's specialist therapeutic services workforce were either not able to provide their services to children or were re-deployed. (This includes Early Years Inclusion Team, Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Health, Physiotherapy and Audiology.) This continued for many months and has had a severe impact on those children who were previously accessing their services and the quality and value of our interventions that are usually informed by these professionals.

Some early evidence shows that the greatest negative impact of lockdown and subsequent covid measures are being felt by the most vulnerable in society. With its pledge of 'Putting Children First' we had expected Government to have increased its relevant resources within the therapeutic services. The opposite has occurred. Children, who were receiving therapeutic services prior to lockdown, are only just re-starting to receive them. Informed by a wealth of international research, we know that their period without support will have long-term impacts on their development. In addition, there are now additional pressures with the waiting list for newly referred children being too long at a key developmental moment in their lives. The evidence shows that our brain development is 80% fully developed by the age of 3 years. If this situation continues, many of these

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children will not have access to the services that they need until their vital window of opportunity has closed. They are likely to make less progress than if they were to access the interventions at the right time and this will be evident over their lifetime with the effects being felt by our entire community in the coming decades. The negative repercussions will cost us far more than the immediate investment required now. The reverberations from the last 18 months will continue to be felt for many more years.

We don't have a 'back to normal' plan or a 'business as usual' plan – as we have just heard that our grant from Children, Education, Young People and Skills will be reduced in 2022. Whilst we do have business plans for services, communications and fundraising, we are currently focusing our on how we meet the unprecedented needs being experienced by children and their families as a direct result of the pandemic, lockdowns, reduced and withdrawn therapeutic government services with a reduced grant from government

We appreciate being able to take part in this process and would welcome your comments or further questions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "FVacher".

Fiona Vacher  
Executive Director