



Brighter Futures

Patrons:

Dr Kyd

The Bailiff of Jersey

Sir Timothy Le Cocq

Registered Charity No: 204

Deputy Catherine Curtis

Chair, The Children, Education and Home Affairs Panel

Thursday 26th September 2024

Dear Deputy Curtis,

As a local registered charity since 2008 who support families, children and young people in Jersey, we are grateful for the opportunity to provide a written response to the Panel in respect of the Government's Proposed Budget 2025 -2028.

Working with approximately 150 families every week in Jersey, Brighter Futures connects with the Government's Plan for the future of our families and the island of Jersey.

Brighter Futures has been strategically and operationally responsive to the emerging needs of families for 17 years. The current Government of Jersey are aware of Brighter Futures. Whilst some members are very supportive, some other members may have limited understanding regarding the work that we do. I hope that this will change as we continue to invite States Members to visit us and our families to learn more about the work that we do. We aim to continue doing this in the hope that more Government support will be forthcoming in the near future to ensure the continuation and longevity of our service.

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference are clear and easy to understand. It is especially vital and relevant to explore whether the revenue expenditure growth, capital and other projects are appropriate and likely to have a positive impact on islanders and island life.

Proposed Budget 2025 – 2028

The Chief Minister stated in his introduction, 'The Budget 2025 -2028 priorities our essential services and seeks to deliver practical solutions to the immediate challenges facing islanders.'

Brighter Futures are currently working with approximately 150 families per week, and as a targeted service, our families are all in need of extra support with their 'immediate challenges' at the point of referral to Brighter Futures. Within our current caseload we are supporting 25 Child Protection/Child in Need families. It could be said that we offer an 'essential service for families in Jersey.'

Throughout the proposed budget I found it very hard to identify any area that considers and clearly supports the THIRD SECTOR or Not for Profit industry.

In 'Other Special Funds' there are such funds as Dormant Bank Account Funds, CI Lottery (Jersey) Fund etc, which do indeed offer some support for Third Sector. However, THIS IS NOT ENOUGH. The Third Sector saves The Government millions of pounds on an annual basis. This is very well known by both the Government and the people of Jersey. In fact, I think it would be fair to say that it is common sense.



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However, this sector is neither acknowledged, respected or clearly supported in this Government Budget 2025 - 2028.

I believe that there should be a significant central fund allocated for the Third Sector and this Government now has the opportunity to do this. The cost for the Government if the Third Sector was no longer available to support the island is immeasurable. Were this to happen due to a lack of foresight from a current Government, I believe the public outcry would be equally immeasurable.

Today there are **451 active charities** in Jersey. In discussions I often hear less informed people state that 'charities should work together.' WE DO. Of these 451 charities, Brighter Futures work closely with 48 of them on a regular basis, e.g. MIND, Focus on Mental Illness, JCCT, Caritas, Silkworth Lodge, Citizen's Advice, Caring Cooks, Community Savings, Grace Trust, Salvation Army, FNHC, Autism Jersey to name but a few. We have contact with many other charities who support us to raise our much-needed funds, such as Jersey Community Foundation, Bosdet, Variety, Lions Club, One Foundation, etc.

Where do Brighter futures fit in the Common Strategic Policy 2024 – 2026

Community Wellbeing. Brighter Futures provide services for families and strengthen the community accessing our service through our Strength's Based Educational Model.

By offering a long-term approach (on average a family is with us for 2 to 3 years) we can support the main carer and their family through our focus on Education, Wellbeing and Relationships. This supports Health (HCS), Education (CYPES) and sometimes a reduced need for Justice and Home Affairs Services. This wrap-around service also enhances the lives of families, many of whom would not access statutory services due to a lack of trust due to previous experiences.

Investment to support FAMILIES is vital.

We provide a long-term approach rather than a 'quick fix' approach. We aim to change the lives of the whole family, creating improved life chances for all of the family. We are a PREVENTATIVE model offering EARLY INTERVENTION.

Brighter Futures aim is to stop negative situations escalating, which could in turn incur significant costs for the Government of Jersey. It currently costs Brighter Futures approximately £7,000 to support a whole family for one year. Should a child be taken into care, statistics indicate that it costs The Government of Jersey (approximately) £100,000 per child per year and over £250,000 if the child needs to be supported off island.

Robin Smith, Chief of States of Jersey Police stated,
"Brighter Futures must save £M's in preventing additional costs to other departments e.g. social services, CYPES, health, police, probation, and even prison. It seems to me that Brighter Futures reduce preventable waste in the system. Brighter Futures offer 'PREVENTION' as opposed to a waste of both time and public money."



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The '**Future Jersey Vision**' states that it focuses on long-term progress and measures community wellbeing, environmental wellbeing and economic wellbeing, which provides a way of measuring Jersey's quality of life.

Brighter Futures know much about Jersey's quality of life. We have worked with over 3,500 families and 13,500 individuals since 2008 and have collated much data to evidence the challenges for families living in Jersey.

Currently poverty is a significant issue in Jersey, alongside increasing mental health challenges for adults, children and young people as well as the many other reasons that families are referred to Brighter Futures such as:

Social isolation, issues with mental or physical health or wellbeing, drug and alcohol issues, postnatal depression, stress and anxiety, depression, domestic violence and domestic abuse, etc.

These are examples of the human challenges facing the community of Jersey in 2024 and should be a clear focus for the long-term vision for Jersey for 2037. Jersey Government MUST invest in and maintain a long-term approach. We require stability and plans which cross-over successive Governments to allow time for projects to achieve their outcomes and ultimately the desired success for Jersey.

Parent feedback

On behalf of this panel, I met with a small group of parents (6 clients) to gather some comments regarding what they want from a Government Plan, and from this current Government specifically.

Prior to the discussion they were asked one question –
Do you vote? The response was 100% NO (6/6)

Please see the comments below as written by 6 parents following the discussion. We focused on the content of the plan and the long-term aims:

- *The Politicians talk about longer term planning but when the Government changes then the next ones come in and change everything again. There is no continuity in our government, this long-term planning feels like a paper exercise.*
- *I never vote, it doesn't make a difference to me and I am too busy with my family to have time to go to things, especially in the evenings.*
- *It has been good to meet some politicians in here (Brighter Futures base at The Bridge) over the last year and it is good to have the chance to speak to them about what is hard for us and our children because they don't live in our communities, and they need to know if they are going to change things. Chatting to them makes us feel listened to.*



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- *The cost of living in Jersey has exploded and it is really hard to manage now to pay the bills and feed the family. They need to keep talking to us to understand what it is like for people who are struggling. I now have many friends and family who have left Jersey and this will keep happening because it is just too hard to stay here. I am born here, and it used to be a great place to live.*
- *It is good to know that they are talking about a long-term plan and trying to do what's best for people in Jersey. Maybe if you are in the business world you would be reading these pages and pages of plans and budgets, but a simple 4-page overview for us would be great so that I can start to understand what is important for my children's future and what they are offering for the years ahead for my family.*
- *I have found today interesting and can see how politics relates to me. Maybe I will try to learn more when I get chance. I am thankful for everything and may Brighter Futures continue with the excellent work it has been doing, they are always very attentive and help us feel valued.*

Brighter Futures next aim is to try to bring politics to clients via more visits from Politicians.

We want to offer our safe and secure environment for clients to have the opportunity to ask their questions in a face-to-face 'Question Time' format.

We want to encourage more of the community to realize the value of their voice in the political arena and thus have more of a say in the future of their children.

IN CONCLUSION

Whilst this response has been less specific regarding the breakdown of the proposed budget, I hope that the information regarding Brighter Futures role and the voice of our families has been informative.

We can evidence that for over 17 years and over 13,500 individuals, our model works.

As asked previously with prior Government Plans, Brighter Futures would again ask that we are part of the Government Plan 2025 – 2028.

Fiona Brennan

Chief Executive Officer

Brighter Futures

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