

2025.04.22

3.9 Deputy H.L. Jeune of the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs regarding the Youth Justice Strategy (OQ.95/2025):

Further to the response to Oral Question 246/2024, will the Minister explain why the Youth Justice Strategy was not published in January 2025 as anticipated and provide an update on when the strategy will be published?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat of St. Helier North (The Minister for Justice and Home Affairs):

Can I ask that the Assistant Minister, who has taken on this role, be the rapporteur, please?

The Bailiff:

Are you content with that, Deputy Jeune?

Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I do not think the Assistant Minister is in the room but also I would like the Minister to answer because it was her answer to the Oral Question that has prompted this question again.

The Bailiff:

Very well, Minister, I am afraid it is a matter for you.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

No, that is fine. I am pleased to say that the Youth Justice roadmap is now ready for publication, pending a final meeting with the Children's Commissioner later this week. We have also prepared a child-friendly version. At the end of January, partners across the system came together to review the final draft ahead of publication. Following valuable feedback, we made some minor amendments and ensured final alignment with other key areas of work. Importantly, a comprehensive C.R.I.A. (Children's Rights Impact Assessment) has also been completed since January. The Youth Justice roadmap has potential to impact on children's rights; therefore, it is essential to assess and evidence how these rights have been considered, both directly and indirectly. The C.R.I.A. confirms the Youth Justice roadmap supports a Children First rights-respecting approach. It has been decided to minimise any negative impact on children while placing their voices and experiences at the heart of decision-making. Despite the final roadmap not yet being published, a Youth Justice Partnership has already been formed, terms of reference agreed and work has begun on the actions of the roadmap. Accountability and governance for this board will be through the B.A.S.C. (Building a Safer Community) and the Ministerial Safeguarding Board.

3.9.1 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

I thank the Minister for that update and positive that there is movement in this space. Could I just ask what the specific factors were to cause the delay in publishing the Youth Justice Strategy? When the Oral Question was asked back at the end of 2024 the Minister was very clear that it would be published in January 2025. Why was this delay decided at the last minute?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

As I stated in my previous response to this question, the reason there was a delay was that we went back and had further feedback and concerns were raised about a number of matters. Following that feedback, we decided that we wanted to make some minor changes, and we

decided to do that prior to publication. It is important that when we do this roadmap that we are able to facilitate and deal with all matters which we are saying that we are going to do. That is why we thought it was more prudent to delay rather than pushing forward.

3.9.2 Deputy H.M. Miles:

Given the previous answer, has the Minister caved to pressure from departments who put the original Youth Justice Strategy in the too-difficult tray?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

I never cave to pressure from anybody so, no, I have not caved to pressure in relation to the strategy or roadmap. I think it is very important that when you decide to implement a roadmap that you are able to achieve what you are saying that you are going to achieve because otherwise it is not worth implementing.

3.9.3 Deputy H.M. Miles:

Will the Minister tell us which of the Children First principles she has decided not to follow in the roadmap?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

Just bear with me for one second. The principles that we have decided to move forward with in relation to the roadmap is number 1: “The Youth Justice system will enable a partnership approach to support a wider systematic approach to engage children in law-abiding and positive behaviours. Children are diverted away from the formal criminal justice system at an earliest point with appropriate support. Children who are engaged in serious or persistent conflict with the law will go on to achieve positive outcomes and children, families, witnesses and community victims recover and move on beyond the impact of harm they have experienced.”

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I asked the Minister the principles which she was not going to follow, and I was specifically thinking about the imprisonment of children.

The Bailiff:

Well, Minister, the question was: are there principles you are not following? The Deputy has now further clarified. Slightly unorthodox but, yes, now you know which is the principle that she is focused on.

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

I think the principle has to be that we will, in all possible outcomes, try and prevent young people ending up in the criminal justice system. However, what we do need to ensure is that we have full alignment to possibilities of how to defer the young people from becoming criminalised. It is important, while we move forward with this roadmap, that we have all possibilities of engaging with young people to keep them out of the criminal justice system. However, there will be occasions where we will have to deal with young people in a positive manner. That is what this roadmap clearly is defined to do, and we all need to work together across Justice and Home Affairs and the Children’s Services in order to achieve this.

3.9.4 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

As this is new news for the Assembly that this is a roadmap and not a strategy, though I have continuously asked questions about the Youth Justice Strategy since the beginning of 2024, could the Minister give an explanation as to why it has turned into a roadmap and not a strategy at the last minute?

Deputy M.R. Le Hegarat:

I think it was just that we decided a roadmap was more appropriate, that we could set out all our principles and the journey in which we wished to take, as opposed to a strategy.