

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

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

BY EMAIL

18 July 2024

Dear Deputy Curtis,

Children's Social Care and the Fostering Service

Thank you for your letter dated the 10th of July with questions relating to staff in Children's Social Care and the Fostering Service.

Please see my responses below.

Staff in Children's Social Care

1. Please could you provide the Panel with a breakdown of the staff employed in Children's Social Care as of 30th June 2024, to include details of:

a. the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) employees;

204.69 FTE

b. the number of permanent staff (and FTE equivalent, where possible);

193.74 FTE

c. the number of temporary / short-term contract staff (and FTE equivalent, where possible);

10.95 FTE*

**This information is based on data in Connect People which only holds contingent workers who work at management level.*

d. the number of vacancies (as both a number and a percentage);

We are unable to accurately provide historical vacancy data within Children's Services due to a lack of historically centrally held data. As from 22 April 2024, we have a new Talent Acquisition system within Connect People, from which we can accurately report on vacancy data. Vacancy data will be published six-monthly in our Public Sector Staffing Statistics, commencing in August 2024.

e. the staff turnover in Children's Social Care for the previous 12 months (the total number of leavers and turnover as a percentage).

Over the last 12 months, 14 staff have left Children's Services, this equates to 6.9% Turnover within the department.

2. The Panel has previously heard (at the [public hearing on 7th March 2024](#)) that improvements have been made to the stability of the workforce in Children's Social Care. Please can you provide specific details about any continued challenges relating to the stability and sustainability of the workforce?

We continue experiencing challenges with recruitment particularly Social Worker roles and roles within Residential Services, until we are able to recruit to roles that are currently undertaken by agency workers or exiting employees who have taken on additional hours we will continue to experience instability within our workforce.

a) Are there any specific roles or positions that are more challenging to fill? If so, what are the reasons for this?

Qualified Social Worker posts in Family Safeguarding are challenging to fill, this is consistent with the UK where this is a more challenging service to recruit for due to the nature of the work. More broadly, the challenge in recruiting for Social Workers is due to a number of factors, including:

- a very competitive market with a lot of open vacancies (both permanent and temporary) throughout the UK
- Social Workers leaving the profession in UK
- unavoidable challenges of recruiting Social Workers to a small island/population. Social Workers encountering children and families outside of the work context is both undesirable and inevitable
- perception in UK of high cost of living in Jersey and difficulty in securing (suitable/desirable) property
- potential negative perception in UK of Jersey Children's Social Care

We have also experienced significant challenges with recruiting Registered Manager, Shift Lead and Residential Childcare Officer (RCCO) roles in Residential Services. The challenges for recruiting Registered Manager roles are similar to recruiting Social Workers, whereas for Shift Lead and RCCO roles the challenges are linked to a competitive on island market of roles at similar pay with more desirable work.

Fostering

- 3. Please can the Panel receive a copy of (or link to) the current information pack or handbook provided to Foster Parents (the [version](#) we have accessed online is dated 2019).**

The Foster Carers handbook is currently being re-written, and due for completion by the end of July 2024. As soon as the new handbook is ready, this will be sent to anyone who requires it.

- 4. Please could you send the Panel copies of any CYPES policy which relates to Foster Care.**

Currently the policies relating to fostering are being either reviewed or written as there is a shortfall in up-to-date policies across Children's Social Care. This is a piece of work currently subject to significant development work, with a bespoke arrangement in place to ensure that this work is brought up to date across the whole directorate, including fostering. Meetings take place with the policy writer regularly to ensure they are progressed with pace.

- 5. Please can you confirm the typical frequency of regular supervision meetings required between Foster Parents and the supervising Social Worker?**

- a. Is there a minimum frequency of meetings?**

There are three different frequencies for fostering supervision visits. These are 4 weekly, 6 weekly or 12 weekly depending on the complexities involved and how long the child has been living with the foster family.

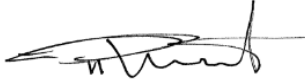
For example, a high-level need foster placement (Level 4+) would require 4 weekly visits as a minimum. A regular fostering placement would require 6 weekly visits as a regular arrangement, and a long-term foster placement, where the child is stable, settled and has lived with the family for over 12 months can be carried out 12 weekly (if appropriate).

- b. Are there any circumstances under which the frequency of these supervisory meetings might be increased or decreased?**

All supervision visit frequencies are agreed by the team manager who endorses changes when appropriate, increasing or decreasing, based on the context, risks, needs etc. These supervision frequencies are saved to the foster carers' register and recorded on the foster carers' files.

There are times when regular carers need more support or supervision, and the frequency of visits can be increased to 4-weekly to reflect this e.g. they might be going through a personal issue, or the child might be experiencing a particularly difficult time, so the carer requires more support. On the contrary, if a child is stable and the carer is managing well and utilising excellent skills, we do not need to intervene and can allow visits to reduce in a proportionate way, in accordance with the policy.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Vibert', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Minister Richard Vibert
Minister for Children and Families

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