

STATES OF JERSEY



MILLI'S CONTACT CENTRE: FUNDING (P.119/2014) – COMMENTS

Presented to the States on 8th September 2014
by the Council of Ministers

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

The Council of Ministers recognises the importance of services such as those provided by Milli's, that enable separated parents to have contact with their children, often in difficult and sensitive circumstances.

The Council is committed to helping ensure that Islanders are able to access high-quality family contact services via the voluntary and community sector, which it believes is often best placed to support separated families. The Council also wishes to ensure that the most appropriate States agency or department leads with regard to the co-ordination of these services from a government perspective.

The Council therefore proposes to formally approach the Probation Board and request that the Probation and After-Care Service leads on working with Island-based contact centre providers, including Milli's.

The Council will ask the Board if it can lead on reviewing options for the potential development of a service level agreement, with a local voluntary and community sector provider, that ensures quality of service, represent value for Islanders and avoids duplication of services.

Any such service level agreement would be based on the National Association of Child Contact Centre (NACCC) guidelines, which is the recognised body. In the case of Milli's Contact Centre, any such agreement would doubtless build on the business case recently developed by the Centre. This business case sets out a revised model of working incorporating early intervention and joint working with other agencies to provide a coherent 'hub' of services specifically for separated families.

P.119/2014 requests that the Minister for Health and Social Services leads on this initiative but, as it stands, the Health and Social Services Department (HSSD) has no commissioning or contractual relationship with Milli's Contact Centre or any other family contact centre provider. Where children under the care of HSSD are involved in supervised contact, it is almost always undertaken by HSSD's own specialist staff. HSSD is, therefore, only a very minor stakeholder in referrals made to the Centre.

The Council believes that lead responsibility for family contact services may, therefore, be better placed with the Probation Service's Jersey Family Court Advisory Service (JFCAS), which resulted from the 2010 Williamson Review of Children's Services. In 2012, JFCAS invested £1,375 into Milli's Contact Centre to ensure that they were able to meet the requirements for membership accreditation of NACCC (The National Association of Child Contact Centres). This investment included volunteer training and establishing robust safeguarding procedures.

Summary

The Council of Ministers supports part (b) of P.119/2014 to the extent that it will help secure, in the longer term, a high-quality family contact service for Jersey and will therefore ask the Probation Board if it will lead on this matter. It must be recognised, however, that in negotiating and commissioning a service, under a service level agreement, there can be no guarantee at the outset as to the service provider, or the quantum of service provided. Milli's is not the only potential provider.

In the event that the Probation Board decline to lead on this matter, the Council of Ministers will work to identify another Department to take forward development of a family contact centre service level agreement.

In light of the fact that Milli's have themselves verbally confirmed that they have sufficient funding for the next 2 years, the Council of Ministers does not support part (a) of P.119/2014, as that part is not believed to be necessary. That said, the Council will request that the Probation Service works to confirm that sufficient funding is in place, in the short term, to support family contact services, as the Council would not wish to see Islanders being denied access to a valuable service whilst a longer term solution is developed.

The Minister for Health and Social Services, in support of this position, has agreed to provide £5k per year, as allocated under Williamson funding towards associated services. This money will be transfer to the Probation Board should they agree to lead on this matter. If other additional funds are required in the longer term to support family contact centres, or their management from a governmental perspective, the Council will consider these through the Medium Term Financial Planning process.