

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS
ON TUESDAY 8th SEPTEMBER 2020**

Home Affairs Services Response to Covid-19

I am sorry that we are not meeting physically today and trust that very soon those of us who wish to, may be able to return to the Chamber once again. I really look forward to that day!

I hope we may now have avoided the worst of the pandemic, and I feel that this is an appropriate moment for me as Minister for Home Affairs to express my sincere and unreserved gratitude to all members of the emergency and frontline services and the wider Justice and Home Affairs (J.H.A.) Department for their service, dedication and commitment during this turbulent and challenging period.

J.H.A. services have truly been on the frontline of preventing and containing the spread of Covid-19 in our community and have had to work in uncertain and difficult circumstances to keep Islanders safe. Most did not, as we did, have the option to work from home. Many put themselves in the line of risk everyday to continue providing the excellent services we all benefit from and have rightly come to expect.

Staff at the Ambulance Service faced significant disruption from an early stage to overcome the challenges responding to the impact of Covid posed to their normal operations. They acted rapidly and with great flexibility to ensure they were prepared to operate under the restrictions of the pandemic and showed an incredible amount of goodwill in doing so.

Teams at the Customs and Immigration Service have worked tirelessly to process applications to the essential travel scheme, which enabled those with an important reason to leave or enter the island to do so, and kept our vital travel links alive. They have also supported the opening of borders since early July, as well as dealing with vast increases in the postal traffic arriving into the island, which has had a significant impact upon resources to prevent the importation of illegal substances into our Island.

The Police have done a brilliant job under tough circumstances enforcing the 'Stay at Home' restrictions whilst supporting our communities using their 4 'E's' approach. Overall this has worked well, and the public have been largely compliant and supportive, although it has not been without its challenges. Under such circumstances the Police have shown all of the patience and professionalism I would expect.

It is a huge compliment to say that the Prison has operated for the most part normally during this time. Unlike prisoners in the U.K. and elsewhere, Jersey Prisoners have been able to continue with educational and physical activities, rather than being constantly locked up. I have no doubt that this is thanks to the far sighted and dedicated preparations of all staff at the Prison and is a really significant achievement of which I hope they are rightly proud.

The Office of the Superintendent Registrar has had to adapt to starkly different ways of working during this time. They have been agile in adapting their processes to allow people to continue to marry and register births and deaths despite the limitations imposed, and have been integral to ensuring the public and Members have had access to vital statistics related to Covid deaths.

We have also seen impressive joint working and collaboration with teams from the Health and Safety Inspectorate, the Fire and Rescue Service and the Field Squadron supporting cross government work on Emergency Planning, the Nightingale Hospital, P.P.E. procurement and distribution and the testing programme. The States of Jersey Police have benefited from an excellent working relationship with their colleagues in the Honorary Police, and the Ambulance Service have received invaluable support from their volunteer partners, St. John's Ambulance and Normandy Rescue.

Finally, the J.H.A. leadership team, in collaboration with their colleagues in Strategic Policy, Performance and Planning, have played a major and fundamental role in directing the overall response to this pandemic. They have worked long days, evenings and weekends to ensure the efficient operation and coordination of the Government's response to this virus. I commend them whole heartedly for the efforts they have made during this difficult time.

I thank you, Mr. Bailiff, and members for indulging me and I know that colleagues will join me in congratulating all of those who have delivered truly exemplary services in these most challenging of times.