

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
BY DEPUTY P.V.F. LE CLAIRE OF ST. HELIER  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 16th JUNE 2009**

**Question**

Is the Minister committed to ensuring that vulnerable children such as the X children continue to receive effective representation so that their voice is heard and their interests safeguarded?

**Answer**

The health, safety and welfare of vulnerable children such as the three children of Family X remain a fundamental and non-negotiable responsibility for me. I am not prepared to compromise in this important field – nor would I expect Members to accept anything less than my full and vigorous support of vulnerable children and their families.

As we know, Andrew Williamson enquired into Children's Services here in Jersey. He declared that Children's Services in Jersey were 'safe' – a declaration he made before his Report was concluded and placed before the States. Notwithstanding this, the Andrew Williamson Report identified a number of recommendations which would significantly strengthen and improve Children's Services. These recommendations are central to the Williamson Implementation Plan which will shortly be debated by the Assembly. My Assistant Ministers and I are fully committed to obtain States funding in order that the plan can be made a reality in full and in a reasonable timescale. I trust that all of the Members of the Assembly will support us in this endeavour.

The States has benefited from the appointment of Professor June Thoburn who has chaired the Jersey Child Protection Committee (until the appointment of Mr Michael Taylor as Chairman of the JCPC a few days ago). The Jersey Child Protection Committee's remit is to ensure that all children are safe and we can all be grateful that under Professor Thoburn's chairmanship the Jersey Child Protection Committee has modernised and transformed itself to such an extent that it can now exercise the highest level of surveillance over child protection matters.

In this context, it is my intention to introduce a number of further measures which will ensure that the voices of vulnerable children are heard and acted upon. These measures – again, central to the Williamson Implementation Plan – include independent inspection of Children's Services and the creation of advocacy services which will be accessible (in every sense of that term) to vulnerable children and families.

It may well be that implied in the Deputy's question is a reference to deliberations which took place in the Royal Court on 12th June following an initiative by the Attorney General. I have yet to be fully briefed on the deliberations in the Royal Court last Friday but will follow these matters with interest – bearing in mind my responsibilities for children which, to repeat, are of fundamental importance to me.