

The Inclusion Project
Jersey Youth Service
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Deputy Inna Gardiner
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
Scrutiny Office
States Greffe
Morier House
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4 November 2021

Dear Deputy Inna Gardiner

PAC launch Government Covid-19 Response Review

Your letter sent by email dated 8 October 2021 to Leana D’Orleans, The Inclusion Project has been passed on to me as the Honorary Chairperson to give our response.

As you are aware The Inclusion Project supports young people aged 11-25 years with special needs and disabilities. These include young people who may either be on the Autistic Spectrum, have a learning difficulty, physical disability, or a sensory impairment.

All have diverse communication needs both receptively and expressively. Some have heightened anxiety around everyday activity and life. Some have mental health challenges and anxiety. Some rely on additional carers and respite support for them and their families.

During the Pandemic the Youth Worker and supporting team members adapted to provide

- online contact – youth clubs by Zoom including the infamous weekly quiz
- individual check-ins and contacts according to needs and by request. Contacts were by telephone, text, email, online video, ‘walk and talk’, in person (when Government guidelines permitted)
- the over 25s transition pathway continued online.
- Access to reassurance, supporting techniques to relieve anxiety, communication and discussion about the rules and guidelines as it affected the young person and their family to aid understanding and compliance.

Between lockdowns and returning to ‘business as usual’

- Following government guidelines gradual reintroduction of attending youth club with face coverings being worn, hand sanitising and social distancing.
- Implementation of Eventbrite bookings system to know and limit numbers according to Government guidelines.

- Continued support through all communication channels to young people adapted to and varied according to individual needs.
- When permitted return to youth clubs and weekly activities (e.g. sports activity) and following Government guidelines
- when government guidelines permitted, the reintroduction of the 'normality' of attending without booking through Eventbrite but turning up / leaving in person at any point during the allocated club time.
- Following government guidelines, the gradual reduction of face coverings, social distancing but maintaining hand sanitising, air circulation etc.

Advise to help improve communication of Government measures next time

- From the outset for all communications to be inclusive of people with different communication styles, modes, and languages.
- Communications in other formats i.e. Easy read, pictures, pictograms, and other languages including British Sign Language, Polish, Portuguese etc
- Communication aimed at children and young people of various ages of understanding and development.
- For these communications to be accessible for parents, carers, and adults as 'story books' or 'story boards' to enable conversations with all their children / young people irrespective of their abilities and communication style.
- Understanding that a child or young person with special needs or disabilities and their families, rely on schooling and respite services to support their caring role. To adapt services and support accordingly
- COVID isolated children, young people with special needs and disabilities, and their families further. Parents / carers were not able to access extended family and/or services for carer support. They were staying at home and having to juggle family and work life with full time care of the medical, educational, and social care needs of their children. If they became ill, it was challenging to then support their cared for person
- From the outset to be mindful of carer fatigue not only during but when coming through the pandemic to living with coronavirus. Children, young people, and adults have differing time frames and reactions to this as a traumatic experience with no predicted time of when that response may be and for how long.

As Chairperson on behalf of the Committee we would like to thank our Youth Worker and supporting team for supporting all the young people in Inclusion Project since 2004, adapting and supporting through the pandemic, and for continuing that support now and into an ever-changing future. Best of all, for consulting and listening to our young people in making the Inclusion Project vibrant and fun. She and they are simply brilliant.

Yours Sincerely

Angela Goddard

Hon. Chairperson

The Inclusion Project