

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND EDUCATION
BY DEPUTY L.V. FELTHAM OF ST. HELIER CENTRAL
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 3rd OCTOBER 2022
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 10th OCTOBER 2022**

Question

Will the Minister advise –

- (a) whether all sections of her department are adequately staffed;
- (b) whether any departmental areas are currently overstaffed and, if any are, outline those areas and the extent of the overstaffing;
- (c) whether any departmental areas are currently understaffed and, if any are, outline those areas and the extent of the understaffing;
- (d) whether staffing levels within Children's Social Care are adequate; and

will she further advise how many vacant posts, if any, there currently are within her department and whether the number of vacancies could increase the risk that services cannot be provided in a safe and timely manner?

Answer

I am grateful to the Deputy for raising this very important challenge that we are facing as a community.

I recognise this challenge and in my 100-day plan I have committed to publishing a Strategic Workforce Plan that describes how I will address this; after publication I will ask officers to support this with a delivery plan setting out how we will implement this plan.

Our total number of vacancies across CYPES is currently 198, which is approximately 8% of the workforce. This is slightly higher than the CYPES annual turnover figure of 6.4%. It is important to note that this higher % is, in part, reflective of new roles as a result of additional investment in some service areas. As an example, CAMHS staffing establishment has increased from 28.58 to 64.58 full time equivalent roles as part of the redesign during the past 12 months.

I am also keenly aware of the additional roles that will be created if my proposals in the Government Plan 2023 – 2026 are approved in December. These roles are critical to the strengthening of our support and services to children. These roles are critical to the ongoing strengthening of our support and services to children and young people however they do exacerbate the recruitment challenge.

For many of these vacancies, the leavers are still in post and working notice. In some cases, it may be necessary to put temporary arrangements in place which will ensure continuity of service and the safety of staff and service users. These arrangements include temporary adjustments to responsibilities and business arrangements along with the use of teaching supply staff in schools and agency social workers and residential care staff.

(a) whether all sections of her department are adequately staffed;

In recent years the need for services across the department providing additional and/or specialist support has increased significantly. This is seen as a marked increase in referrals to services and assessed level and complexity of need. This has been particularly prevalent during and post the global pandemic. This is not an issue unique to Jersey but has also been evident in other jurisdictions.

This has meant a review of staffing and services to put in place services with the accompanying staffing to meet the growth in need and considered as part of the proposed Government Plan.

Education

The Government Plan 2023-26 reflects the identification of unmet needs in the wider education system, in particular for children with additional needs. If approved, much of the investment would be in our workforce. So, whilst subject to filling current known vacancies we are adequately staffed, this increase in our ambitions further grows our capacity and capability.

Delivery

The breadth and complexity of change, both now and in the future, will require the department to increase capacity and capability to deliver. We currently ensure adequacy through the employment of contingent labour.

(b) whether any departmental areas are currently overstaffed and, if any are, outline those areas and the extent of the overstaffing;

There are no areas across the department considered as overstaffed.

(c) whether any departmental areas are currently understaffed and, if any are, outline those areas and the extent of the understaffing;

See table below for details.

Education

Pressures in education continue and we are managing these through the development of enhanced recruitment capabilities and working actively with schools to support their workforce needs. The recruitment challenges, intensified by absence, put schools at a risk of understaffing by utilising any spare capacity. This means that there are risks of partial closures to classes or year groups. Whilst these significant actions may be necessary to ensure continued safe provision in schools, they are very much only considered when all reasonable actions to remain fully open have been taken.

Children's Social Care and Integrated Services and Commissioning

The establishments across Children’s Social Care and Integrated Services and Commissioning (which includes Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Family and Community support) have been the subject of review and redesign in recent years.

As a result, there has been additional investment allocated through the Government Plan to support expansion of services to meet rising levels of need. From time-to-time resources are re-aligned to meet need in different areas of services.

There is a significant reform agenda in the area of children’s social care which requires the redesign and strengthening of services in the system supporting children from early intervention to more intensive and specialist support including increasing the range and quantity of homes for children who are in the care of the Minister. It is recognised that there is a significant resource requirement to support the programme with an increase of staffing establishment in some services. The reform programme is set out in the proposed Government plan 2023-2026.

There are currently challenges in recruitment to some roles. In particular those posts which require a professionally qualified and registered social workers and residential childcare officers. These challenges are set out in the table below.

(d) whether staffing levels within Children’s Social Care are adequate; and

will she further advise how many vacant posts, if any, there currently are within her department and whether the number of vacancies could increase the risk that services cannot be provided in a safe and timely manner?

The need for services provided as part of the broad range of social care services has and continues to increase. The new Children and Young People (Jersey) Law 20—sets in statute new duties, responsibilities and powers for the Minister and for those designated as corporate parents that require additionality to current services, these requirements are set out as part of the proposed Government Plan.

The table below sets out the vacancies that CYPES is actively recruiting to and where an appointment has yet to be made. Vacancy figures are as of 7th October, headcount figures are as of 30th September:

Service	Number of Open Vacancies (unfilled roles)	Total positions (headcount) in department	How are open vacancies being covered i.e., still in post, agency cover, supply staff etc
Children’s Social Care	Social work – 40 Residential Homes – 14 Other – 4 Total 58	75 107 15 Total 197	Vacancies made up of a combination of leavers and new roles. They are covered though a combination of agency social workers (35) and residential childcare officers (3), overtime and temporary adjustments to responsibilities and business arrangements.
Education – schools and college	Teachers & Lectures x 31 Teaching Assistants x 50 Other x 19 Total 100	917 605 329 Total 1,851	Vacancies made up of a combination of leavers, new roles and internal transfers. They are covered though a combination of leavers still in post working notice, supply cover and temporary adjustments to responsibilities and business arrangements.

Education – central services (Inclusion Early Years SIAS)	17	168	Vacancies made up of a combination of leavers and new roles. They are covered through a combination of leavers working notice, supply cover and temporary adjustments to responsibilities or reorganisation of staff.
Director Generals Office	3	50	Vacancies are covered by agency worker and temporary adjustments to responsibilities.
Family and Community Support	5	45	Vacancies made up of a combination of leavers and new roles. They are covered by agency workers and zero hours contracts.
CAMHS	9	39	Vacancies made up of a combination of leavers and new roles covered by agency workers and through temporary acting up into a role.
Intensive Youth Support	13	19	New service.
Youth Service	Youth Service x 9	60	Vacancies made up of a combination of leavers and new roles covered through temporary adjustments to responsibilities and business arrangements.
Skills	3	28	Still in post working notice.
Total	198	2,457	

I can assure that the safety and well-being of children and young people is the highest priority of staff working in all of our services. Whilst we are facing the staffing pressures detailed here, we would never compromise on the safe provision of our services. For example, when the Covid pandemic hit particularly high level, staffing shortages were particular challenges in many schools. Headteachers were in daily contact with the Department as they planned to the cover arrangements to maintain normal running. On some occasions when all avenues were exhausted (the use of supply/cover staff; internal re-assignment of staff; leadership taking frontline roles etc) it was clear that it was not safe to fully open the school. Whilst always a last resort, the temporary closure of part of classroom or a year group was exactly on the grounds that it would not be safe to fully open without adequate staffing to ensure safety. Such arrangements in schools also required the postponement of non-urgent internal meetings to prioritise the frontline access of children and young people to their schooling. In some other services in CYPES staffing shortages may lead to postponed appointments, impacting on the timeliness of service delivery.