

STATES OF JERSEY



GOVERNMENT PLAN 2021–2024 (P.130/2020): THIRD AMENDMENT

Lodged au Greffe on 27th November 2020
by the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

STATES GREFFE

1 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (e) –

After the words “Appendix 2 – Summary Table 5(i)” insert the words –

“, except that, in Summary Table 6, the efficiency and re-balancing measure to review and realign the budget for care leavers with demand shall be deleted”.

2 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (f) –

After the words “Appendix 2 – Summary Tables 5(i) and (ii) of the Report” insert the words –

“, except that, in Summary Table 5(i), the head of expenditure for the Department of Children, Young People, Education and Skills shall be increased by £100,000 to allow for the review and realignment of the budget for care leavers with demand”.

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND HOME AFFAIRS SCRUTINY PANEL

Note: After this amendment, the proposition would read as follows –

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

to receive the Government Plan 2021 – 2024 specified in Article 9(1) of the Public Finances (Jersey) Law 2019 (“the Law”) and specifically –

- (a) to approve the estimate of total States income to be paid into the Consolidated Fund in 2021 as set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 1 to the Report, which is inclusive of the proposed taxation and impôts duties changes outlined in the Government Plan, in line with Article 9(2)(a) of the Law;
- (b) to approve the amounts to be transferred from one States fund to another for 2021, in line with Article 9(2)(b) as set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 2 to the Report;
- (c) to approve the proposed borrowing to be obtained for 2021, in line with Article 9 (2)(c), up to and including the amount set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 3 to the Report;
- (d) to approve each major project that is to be started or continued in 2021 and the total cost of each such project and any amendments to the proposed total cost of a major project under a previously approved government plan, in line with Article 9(2)(d), (e) and (f) of the Law and as set out in Appendix 2 - Summary Table 4 to the Report;

- (e) to endorse the efficiencies and other re-balancing measures for 2021 contained in the Government Plan as set out in Appendix 2 Summary Table 6 and reflected within each gross head of expenditure in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 5(i), except that, in Summary Table 6, the efficiency and re-balancing measure to review and realign the budget for care leavers with demand shall be deleted;
- (f) to approve the proposed amount to be appropriated from the Consolidated Fund for 2021, for each head of expenditure, being gross expenditure less estimated income (if any), in line with Articles 9(2)(g), 10(1) and 10(2) of the Law and set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Tables 5(i) and (ii) of the Report, except that, in Summary Table 5(i), the head of expenditure for the Department of Children, Young People, Education and Skills shall be increased by £100,000 to allow for the review and realignment of the budget for care leavers with demand;
- (g) to approve the estimated income, being estimated gross income less expenditure, that each States trading operation will pay into its trading fund in 2021 in line with Article 9(2)(h) of the Law and set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 7 to the Report;
- (h) to approve the proposed amount to be appropriated from each States trading operation's trading fund for 2021 for each head of expenditure in line with Article 9(2)(i) of the Law and set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 8 to the Report; (i) to approve the estimated income and expenditure proposals for the Climate Emergency Fund for 2021 as set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 9 to the Report;
- (i) to approve the estimated income and expenditure proposals for the Climate Emergency Fund for 2021 as set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 9 to the Report;
- (j) to approve, in accordance with Article 9(1) of the Law, the Government Plan 2021-2024, as set out at Appendix 3 to the Report.

REPORT

As part of its review of projects, actions and efficiencies within the Government Plan 2021-24, the Children, Education and Home Affairs Panel (hereafter 'the Panel') has identified three specific amendments as a result. This amendment focusses on the decision to reduce the budget for the Care Leavers package by £100,000 in 2021 as part of the efficiencies and rebalancing programme.

During its review of the Government Plan, the Panel wrote to a number of key stakeholders in order to gather views on the new revenue projects for 2021 as well as the efficiency and rebalancing programmes. The Panel received significant feedback from Jersey Cares in relation to this particular efficiency saving. The following comments were received from young people with experience of care in relation to the proposed savings:

"I feel it is another example of the Government going 'well you are not that important, not as important as other budgets, or other things because we can reduce this by a huge amount. Goes into how they already feel about us anyway'".

"Well they can't really be reducing it. They said it has been 'out there' but not a lot of care leavers know fully what is in it still. So, they shouldn't be doing that."

"It isn't being promoted because I still don't know what I can and can't have from the Care Leavers Offer and then also most social workers don't know how to access the money or how to go about getting it sorted, so it clearly isn't well thought out." To remove the money because care leavers can access from other budgets doesn't make sense because the care leavers offer was originally out there because there weren't other budgets to cover what the care leavers budget covers."

"The Care Leavers' Offer is not being 'actively promoted' at all, not one bit. Well promoted, but hardly put into practice."

'I have spent an untold amount of hours on this, having conversations about this, and meltdowns over this. I start a new course in weeks, I have not got the time, nor brain capacity, to continue on as we are, due to what appears to me as a lack of care. I will also add, that the flat and first home that I have sourced, came with zero help from what is supposed to be a 'leaving care team'. What you are doing ensures that care leavers like I contribute to the ugly statistics of failure among Care Experienced young people, you are helping to add to the stigma that we all apparently try to fight.' –

Young care leaver trying to secure a home before the new academic year.¹

Further feedback from Jersey Cares, an advocacy service, was also raised in relation to the Care Leavers offer and how it was being promoted both to professionals and to care leavers themselves:

¹ Submission – Jersey Cares

A considerable amount of our advocacy work has been supporting 'care leavers' to understand what they can access and how to do it. This has been exceedingly difficult. We sought clarity about whether or not the Offer had an implementation plan, as a wide range of relevant professionals were unaware of it, unsure of its contents and told us that they were not able to access what it offered.²

The Government Plan states that the Care Leavers Offer has been 'actively promoted'. In addition to the points raised above, Children's Services are not in contact with 50% of 'care leavers' and plan to contact them later this year to inform them about the Offer. The Offer was taken out of printed circulation earlier this year so that it could be re-written, and an implementation plan put in place. As per some of the comments shared above, even where people are aware of it, if it cannot be accessed or is extremely difficult to access, this poses a significant barrier to measuring uptake, which has informed this reduction in budget.³

This view was also shared by the children's charity Brightly who stated that it was widely accepted that the offers for those in care and leaving care have not been implemented at all well, although there is work ongoing to address this.⁴

Whilst the Panel understands that the offer will now be promoted by a team of 5 personal advisers that work with care leavers (a caseload of 12 per adviser was quoted to the Panel in response to questions at a public hearing), concerns exist around the level of consultation with care leavers that has taken place in order to promote the service and come to this conclusion.

The Panel is concerned that the approach adopted through this particular efficiency appears to overlook the concerns and issues that have been raised directly by service users. There is also concern that the whilst demand may be currently low, there is evidence to suggest this may be down to the lack of promotion of the service and demand may sharply rise now that the personal adviser roles are in place. This will require regular review in order to ensure that care leavers are not being denied access to funding to assist them directly.

The Panel would also highlight that the programme has only been in place for 9 months at this stage (launched in February 2020). Given the concerns raised directly by care leavers about the promotion of the project, and the fact that the personal adviser roles have not been in place for the entirety of that period, the Panel suggests that it is premature to make the saving of £100,000 without fully consulting and understanding future take-up. It therefore proposes that the funding remains for 2021 and only after further consultation and promotion has taken place should it be reviewed and any future decision on funding levels made.

Financial and Manpower Implications

Whilst there are no direct manpower implications arising from this amendment, the financial implications of adopting this amendment are that the efficiency would not be

² Submission – Jersey Cares

³ Submission – Jersey Cares

⁴ Submission – Brightly

met. Either the target would remain not to be met by the end of 2021 or other efficiencies would have to be brought forward to replace it.