

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BY DEPUTY
G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 28th APRIL 2009**

Question

What emphasis, if any, will be placed on listening to and acting on the wishes of the children themselves when developing services for looked-after children in Jersey?

Answer

In terms of individual care, all looked-after children in Jersey have a named, qualified and experienced Social Worker allocated to their case who is responsible under Looked After Children Procedures for visiting, consulting and listening to the individual child on an a regular (minimum six weekly) basis. This is on top of the child's daily contact with residential staff or foster carers.

Each child then has a comprehensive 'care plan' which (where age appropriate) is developed in consultation with the child and which is reviewed and updated through a system of regular six monthly review meetings, which the child is encouraged to attend and to contribute. The 'Independent Chair' of these meetings is highly skilled at welcoming the individual child and in assisting them to contribute to these meetings.

When it comes to 'service development', the position is as outlined in Recommendation 5 of the Williamson Report: Implementation Plan, where it is identified that there is much that is already being developed that will assist in providing a 'voice for the child' and for 'service users' in developing services for children and young people in Jersey:

- The newly formed Jersey Child Protection Committee - Safeguarding Children Away from Home Sub-Committee is working on the development of a formal 'Looked after Children Advocate role' for those in care or who have recently left care.
- The JCPC Procedures and Audit sub-group has within its remit the responsibility to design accessible and non-threatening ways for parents and young people to have the opportunity of feeding in their views about the child protection service and process so that the JCPC can take appropriate action to achieve change and improvement.
- The JCPC Communications sub-committee is also looking at ways of making the work of the JCPC better known in the community, with one of its aims being to encourage Jersey citizens to contribute to the task of protecting children. A website is being established which will eventually provide links to self-help and voluntary representative groups which provide help to vulnerable children and families.
- The Youth Service YESS project, which though a universal advice service for young people, also has an important role to play as a user friendly accessible service with a track record of engaging with young people including those who are vulnerable and disaffected.

All of this sits alongside other already established mechanisms:

- Young people from within the care system being involved in meeting and 'interviewing' potential candidates for children's social work vacancies to provide advice and guidance to service managers and HR professionals on those applicants that are considered, by the young people themselves, to be the most appropriate for the posts.
- A Fostering Panel: made up of independent members and those drawn from relevant disciplines. The function of this Panel is to advise on the suitability of persons who apply to become Foster Carers; consider their continuing approval following annual review or any complaint, allegation or other significant change in

their circumstances; and to advise on any other matter relating to the fostering service.

- An Adoption/Permanence Panel: constituted in a similar way to the Fostering Panel. This body advises of the suitability of persons who apply to be adoptive or long term foster carers; considers their continuing approval as above; considers the case of any child referred to it and makes a recommendation as to whether the child should be placed for adoption; and considers proposed placements for such children and make recommendations accordingly.
- An Independent Board of Visitors for Greenfields which has been established under the Children (Jersey) Law 2002 Regulations.

If full funding for the Williamson Implementation Plan recommendations was to be made available, then an Independent Visitor Service for Looked After Children and an Advocacy Service for children and young people (as outlined in full in Recommendation 5 of the Implementation Plan) would be developed to enhance the existing provisions outlined above.