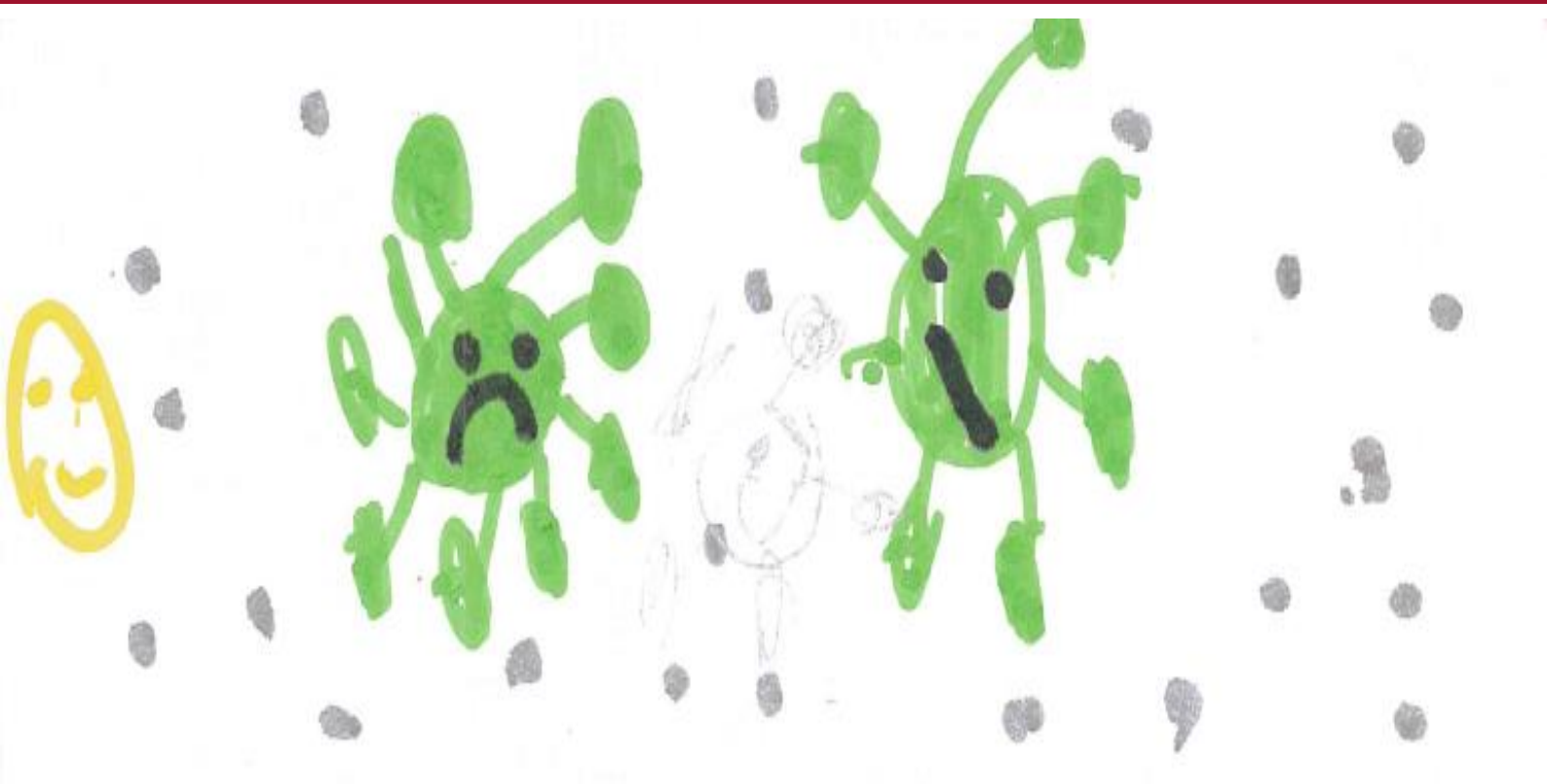


# Covid-19 Response: Impact on Children and Young People

Children, Education and Home  
Affairs Scrutiny Panel

5<sup>th</sup> April 2022

S.R.4/2022



States of Jersey  
States Assembly



États de Jersey  
Assemblée des États



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NB: The image on the cover of this report was produced by a local child who contributed to the Panel’s call for evidence seeking views from younger children in picture form on what the Covid-19 pandemic meant to them.

## 1. Lead Member's Foreword

The COVID-19 Pandemic has brought about unprecedented challenges to the Island that have had an impact across all sections of our society. Given the Government's strategic priority of 'putting children first' it was important to the Panel that we examined the response to the pandemic and how it has impacted children and young people.

First and foremost, I would like to say a massive thank you to all the children and young people and participants in the focus groups who gave up their time to share their experiences with the Panel. You have helped us to understand the issues you have faced and also shone a light on key matters affecting you. We have listened to these points and our recommendations to Government have been informed by your voice.

It is imperative that the voice of the child is captured and listened to in order to inform policy going forward in relation to not just the pandemic but all areas of public service. It is also important to remember that children and young people are experts in their own lives and experiences. It would be remiss of Government and the States Assembly as a whole to not listen to these diverse voices in our community.

I would like to place on record my thanks to our advisers, Dr. Ceri Brown and Dr. Michael Donnelly for providing a thorough and hard-hitting report which examined the response of Government against the backdrop of childhood development. Their report has helped us shape our recommendations and overall report in order to place children right at the very centre of the issues raised. I would also like to thank Dorothy and her team at 4insight for facilitating the focus groups, which I believe are the first undertaking within scrutiny to directly involve children and young people.

I would also like to offer my sincerest thanks to all education professionals and professionals working with children and young people for everything you have done during this most challenging of times. Your dedication and hard work to ensure our children had and continue to have the best outcomes is truly appreciated.

The pandemic has predominately been built on negative and worrying experiences, however, it was heart-warming to see so many responses directly from children and young people that talked about love of family and the time they were able to spend with family as a result of the lockdowns and stay at home order. Prior to the pandemic, the concept of flexible working was often found in small pockets throughout our community, however, since then it has become much more prevalent. The evidence we received spoke to this in a positive light and it is vital that, as we move forward, the positive influence this can have on children and young people is maintained as a matter priority.

Attachment and human connections are undoubtedly some of the most important aspects of a child's development, especially for younger children. We must not lose sight of the impact that the pandemic will have had on those children for whom the majority of their life experience has been stay at home orders, limited social interaction and not being able to spend time with elderly relatives and friends. Children are only children for a very short period of time, and it is in these formative years that they are shaped and moulded into the individuals that they will become in adulthood. Whilst some positives have appeared in relation to children getting to spend more time with their parents, this must be tempered with the sad realisation that not all children will grow up in these circumstances and many will have suffered negative and life altering experiences as a result of the pandemic. The Government of Jersey must be ready to identify and address the issues that will likely arise down the road for these children as a matter of priority with sufficient funding and resources to ensure all children, no matter what

their experience of the pandemic, have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and grow up to be happy and healthy adults.

Finally, I would like to place on record my gratitude to the Chair of the Panel, Deputy Ward for his assistance in carrying out this review, to our officers for their excellent work, and again thank all the children, young people and their families who contributed to this review.



**Deputy Louise Doublet**  
**Vice-Chair, Children, Education and Home Affairs Panel**  
**Lead Member for the Review**

## 2. Executive Summary

The Covid-19 Pandemic has been one of the largest challenges to the Island since the Second World War and the impact on all corners of our society has been profound. The Government and States Assembly has been forced to make difficult decisions in very limited time in the interests of preserving life and maintaining crucial services across all of the Island's sectors. As one of the main priorities of this Government has been 'Putting Children First' the Children, Education and Home Affairs Panel ('the Panel') agreed in late 2020 that it would undertake this review in order to examine the impact of the Government's response on children and young people in line with this strategic priority. In order to carry out this review, the Panel commissioned focus groups with children and young people, undertook a short optional survey with children aged 7-18, and provided children 7 and under the opportunity to complete a 'postcard' where they could express their views about the pandemic in writing, choosing an 'emoji' that best described their feelings or drawing a picture. The Panel also commissioned Dr Ceri Brown and Dr. Michael Donnelly from the University of Bath to provide expert advice on the impact of the pandemic response on the development of children and young people.

### Focus Groups

In order to inform this review, the Panel agreed that views would need to be sought from numerous sources. Most importantly, it was agreed that the views of children and young people should be directly identified and addressed as the cornerstone of the review. The Panel commissioned local company 4insight to undertake focus groups with children, young people and their families during April and May 2021. Nine focus groups were conducted during April and May 2021, with 57 participants involved. Overall, 58% of respondents within the focus groups cited a negative sentiment in relation to their experience of the pandemic. The impact on socialisation, education and mental health were identified as being the biggest challenges to children and young people. Getting to spend time with family, saving money (especially amongst older young people) and the amount of free time were most commonly highlighted as positive impacts of the pandemic. The main implications identified were the wellbeing of children, studies going online, education in general and not having any interaction with friends. Younger children also highlighted being bored and feeling lazy as implications as well. The focus groups also had a mixed view of how children and young people were communicated to as the pandemic progressed, with younger children found to not have any awareness of communication from Government.

### Survey and Postcards

In order to gather broader views from children and young people in relation to their experience of the pandemic, the Panel created a short survey for children and young people aged 7 - 25 to complete. In total 361 surveys were completed. The majority of respondents (61.78%) gave a neutral or negative response as to their view on the decision to close schools. Reasons given for the answers ranged from positive to negative, with the most common point raised being children and young people not being able to socialise with their friends at school. The majority of respondents (57.06%) felt either satisfied or neither satisfied or unsatisfied that their needs had been met during the first lockdown between March and June 2020. Overall, 67.31% of respondents gave a positive or neutral view as to whether their needs had been met. 38.91% of respondents (128) felt that they wanted help and support in relation to fun activities. 20.36% of respondents (67) felt that they needed more support in relation to school-work and 8.21% (27) respondents stated that they needed someone to talk to. The majority of respondents stated that they did not need any additional help or support, with other examples of support required including returning to the classroom and assistance for bringing home students from university. Many respondents highlighted the impact of the pandemic on their



mental health and feeling bored or anxious as a result as well. In terms of positive responses, getting to spend time with family was highlighted most often in response to the survey.

Noting the various different ways in which children and young people communicate, especially younger children, the Panel agreed that a different approach would be taken in relation to children in Early Years settings up to the age of seven. As such, the Panel developed a 'postcard' to allow young children to provide feedback on their experience through writing, drawing a picture or choosing an 'emoji' which best summed up their feelings about the pandemic. The Panel received 132 completed postcards. The majority of these were completed by children aged 4 and 5. The majority of responses from younger children to the Panel's postcard asking for their experience of the previous year of the pandemic stated a negative or neutral sentiment (83%), with 32% of respondents (42) feeling that their experience was not very good and a further 27% (35) feeling that their experience had been awful. 24% (32) felt that it had been ok. The main themes highlighted by children in response to the postcards were children missing their friends, not being in school and being worried for family members/not being able to see them. The main positive theme that emerged were in relation to children getting to spend more time with their family as a result of having to stay at home.

Overall, the Panel found two key themes arising from the voice of children and young people from this review. Firstly, it is clear that children and young people reported a mixture of positive and negative impacts as a result of the pandemic. We also found, direct from children and young people, that they did not always feel that they had been put first during the response to the pandemic.

### Key Issues Identified

#### Impact on Mental Health

The impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health was identified as one of the key issues and concerns for them. This was highlighted in submissions, the focus groups, survey and advisers report. The Panel has found that the Minister for Children and Education has accessed an additional £300k in 2020 and £955k in 2021 from the COVID contingency funding in order to address increased numbers of referrals and waiting times for the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service alongside other services. This has, by 2022, reduced the waiting times experienced to pre-pandemic levels. The Panel has recommended that the Minister(s)<sup>1</sup> for Children and Education should ensure that the additional £1.25 million of funding over 2020 and 2021 that was identified from the COVID emergency funds to address waiting times and the backlog of cases in CAMHS is maintained in the base budget for the Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills within the next Government Plan 2023-26. This will provide additional funding in order to continue to reduce waiting times across the service post-pandemic. It has also recommended that the Minister should continue to explore the means to reduce waiting times within CAMHS further. As part of this work, the Minister should, as soon as reasonably practical, identify and publish a 'gold standard' which sets out the expected waiting time for a young person accessing CAMHS services and what support they can expect to receive prior to their appointment.

#### Impact on socialisation

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<sup>1</sup> The Panel notes that, at present, the role of Minister for Children and Education is one role as defined under Standing Orders. Noting that this role is a new role created in the current States Assembly, should the role be separated in a future government, the recommendation will apply to both Ministers and where one Minister has clear official responsibility for the area in question, it will apply to that Minister only.



The impact of the pandemic on the socialisation of children and young people was raised through the focus groups, survey and postcards, with a high number of responses explaining that children missed playing with their friends as a result of the stay-at-home order. The Panel's own survey found that 38.91% (128) of respondents wanted additional support with fun activities post-lockdown. The Panel has received evidence during the review to highlight the increased risk on younger children's development as a result of the impact on their socialisation during the pandemic. The Government is due to address a number of residual issues in relation to children's health and wellbeing through funding allocated from the COVID-19 Health and Social Recovery funding. It is not clear, however, whether this funding will help to assist in the developmental impact around socialisation.

In response to these findings the Panel has recommended that the Minister(s) for Children and Education should, as part of a wider response to the impact of the pandemic on children and young people, undertake a review of the leisure and play activities/facilities available to children and young people in Jersey in order to address any gaps in provision and highlight what is available. This should be completed by the end of 2022, with the findings made publicly available. Further to the publication of the review, the Minister should identify an action plan with specific timescales and key milestones for any improvements identified. The Panel has also recommended that the Minister(s) for Children and Education should ensure that, as part of the funding allocated to improve Children's Education, Health and Wellbeing within the COVID-19 Post-Emergency Strategy, sufficient emphasis is given to addressing the developmental impacts on children of all ages, but with a particular focus on very young children, that may have developed due to restrictions on socialisation during the pandemic.

### Impact on poverty

The Panel has received evidence during the review to suggest that foodbank usage has increased during the pandemic for some families which is in turn having a knock-on effect on children and young people in those families. The Chief Minister has acknowledged that more information is required in this area in order to identify any increased usage and level of need. The most recent data in relation to foodbank usage is from a 2017 survey. The Panel has recommended that the Chief Minister ensures research is undertaken as a matter of priority to establish the number of families that are accessing foodbanks as a result of the impact of the pandemic by the end of 2022. It has also recommended that the Government of Jersey should urgently conduct a review to assess the barriers to preventing and overcoming poverty in the Island. This should be completed by the end of 2022 in order to inform the longer-term strategy as the Island recovers from the pandemic.

There is concern that a hidden section of society (aged 16-25-year-olds) could be impacted further by the pandemic due to not being able to claim the accommodation component of income support in their own right. The Chief Minister has suggested that more information is required in order to establish the potential depth of the issue. As a result of this finding the Panel has recommended that the Chief Minister should, in consultation with the Minister for Social Security, establish the number of young people aged 16-25 who are ineligible for the accommodation component of income support with a view to identifying any gaps in support for this cohort as a result. This should be completed by the end of 2022 and reported back to the Panel.

### Impact on Education

There is widespread acknowledgement that one of the largest impacts on children and young people throughout the pandemic has been in relation to their education. It is clear that considerable work has been undertaken by the Government of Jersey in order to address this impact, however, the full and true impact of the pandemic on children's learning may not be

known for some time yet. The Panel commends the response of the Government in relation to addressing the impact of the pandemic on children's learning, however, again highlights that the full impact may not be realised for some time yet. It has, therefore, recommended that the Minister for Children and Education should ensure that the impact of the pandemic on children's learning is closely monitored as a matter of priority. The Minister should ensure that monitoring does not adversely impact on children or become a burden to professionals. Additional funding should be allocated to address any emerging issues.

### Impact on Early Years

There is widespread evidence to highlight the significant impact of the pandemic on children within the early years age bracket. This is, however, acknowledged by Government who have put in place developments in order to mitigate this impact. As with education in general, the full and true impact of the pandemic on children within the early years age group may not be known, however, for some time yet. Recognition of the emotional penalties on younger children as a result of the stay-at-home order (noting that younger children's life experience of negative impacts is significantly larger than older children and young people) is also crucial to develop strategies that address any issues that arise. The Panel has recommended that the Minister(s) for Children for Education should ensure the ongoing monitoring of the impacts of the pandemic in relation to the early year's cohort beyond just academic outcomes. Given the potential for issues to arise further down the line in terms of a child's development, the Minister should also ensure that this monitoring is conducted regularly and is inclusive of the child's family and professionals working with them. The Minister should ensure that monitoring does not adversely impact on children and families or become a burden to professionals. Funding should be allocated to address any emerging issues, including appropriate funding to any third-sector or arms-length organisations providing services from conception to compulsory school age.

### Impact on Domestic Violence

An increase in instances of domestic abuse and violence towards children was highlighted during the initial lockdown in 2020. The Government of Jersey undertook a media campaign to encourage members of the public to identify children at risk during the initial lockdown, however, the Panel has not seen further targeted work to address the increase in domestic violence. The Minister(s) for Children and Education should, in collaboration with the Minister for Home Affairs, establish a strategy and sufficient funding for Government and third sector organisations in order to tackle the increase in domestic abuse and the impact this has had on children as a result of the pandemic. This should be completed by the end of 2022.

### Positive Impacts of the Pandemic

The implementation of the Children and Families Hub was brought forward from September 2020 to March 2020 in order to provide a 'front door' for support services in relation to children and young people. This has been recognised as a positive development in the early stages of the pandemic. The Minister(s) for Children and Education should continue to ensure the Children and Families Hub is effectively resourced to ensure that the service provides a simplified access point for families, professionals and children and young people when in need of support.

As states previously, children and young people highlighted that one of the key positives of the pandemic was being able to spend more time with their family. The Panel also found that flexible working arrangements that have occurred during the pandemic have also contributed to allowing parents to spend more time with their children. The Panel has recommended that the States Employment Board should commit to maintaining, post-pandemic, the flexible working arrangements adopted during the pandemic for States of Jersey employees. This will

in turn assist in promoting the family friendly approach which has been adopted to date. The Panel would also highlight the need to avoid a culture that blends home and work together, and these arrangements need to ensure employees are not being contacted outside their working hours, so that they can focus on their children. Consideration should also be given to whether legislation accompanied by appropriate support should be put in place to enable workers in the private sector to have better access to family friendly working arrangements.

### Decision making processes

The Panel found that the Minister for Children and Education is not an automatic member of the Emergencies Council or the Competent Authorities Ministers. Whilst it is acknowledged that the Minister can be invited to attend meetings, the Panel is of the opinion that the Minister should be automatically included in the members of the two decision making bodies given the remit of the role. It has, therefore, recommended that the Chief Minister should make the necessary legislative changes in order to include the Minister for Children and Education as an automatic member of the Emergencies Council. The Minister should also be made an automatic member of the Competent Authorities Ministers.

A number of Children's Rights Impact Assessments were undertaken at key stages during the pandemic, even though no statutory duty was in place to ensure they were completed. It should also be noted that legislation to ensure a due regard model in respect of children's rights is due to be debated at the end of March 2022. The Panel is pleased to see that Children's Rights Impact Assessments (CRIAs) have been completed during the response to the pandemic, especially in light of the lack of a statutory requirement to do so. It has recommended that the Council of Ministers should continue to undertake CRIAs at all key points in the response to the Pandemic as a matter of priority.

### Putting Children First during the pandemic

The Children's Commissioner and Panel Adviser's concluded that Government did not always put children first in response to the pandemic. It is the view of the Chief Minister and Minister for Children and Education, however, that Government has continued to meet with all groups in order to better inform its decision making. There appears to be a disconnect between Government and key stakeholder views as to whether the Government of Jersey has put children first throughout the pandemic. The Chief Minister has also stated that in order to understand the general assertion that the Government has not put children first, it is best to understand the detail behind it. The Panel has recommended that the Chief Minister, as soon as practicable, engages in dialogue with the Children's Commissioner to understand the view further. It has also recommended that the Chief Minister should also wherever possible, and from the earliest stages, directly engage with children to seek their views on what they want and need, when forming policy or legislation which will affect them.

### Corporate Parenting during the pandemic

There is a shared view across the evidence received as to what is meant by a successful corporate parent. The Government of Jersey shares and acknowledges this view, however, concern has been raised throughout the review that this may not have been at the forefront of decision making during the pandemic. The Corporate Parenting Board also did not meet between September 2020 and September 2021. It is the view of the Panel that this is not acceptable given its importance during a particularly trying time. However, the disruption within the Ministerial portfolio for children between November 2020 and June 2021 cannot be discounted as a reason for the board not meeting. The Panel has recommended that the Minister for Children and Education ensures that the Corporate Parenting Board continues to meet on a regular basis given its importance in respect of some of the most vulnerable children and young people in Jersey. The Minister should also ensure that a timetable of proposed

meeting dates for the board is published on the Government of Jersey website as a matter of urgency in order to increase transparency.

### Communication with children and young people

The focus groups and Panel Advisers found that a statement by the Chief Minister in November 2020 had been taken in a negative way, with some responses in the focus groups feeling that the statement had scapegoated young people for a spike in cases during that period. It is also the view of the Children's Commissioner that there was insufficient targeted messaging to children and young people during the pandemic. Successful examples were highlighted in relation to Facebook live events which children and young people engaged with, however, these only took place twice during the pandemic and as Facebook is only accessible to children aged 13 and over, this would have by implication excluded any children below that age. Noting the progress made by Government in the utilising Facebook Live initiatives during the pandemic, the Minister for Children and Education should ensure that more of these events are carried out in general to engage children and young people in communicating important information. The Minister should also continue to develop further targeted communication initiatives to engage with children and young people who are not old enough to access social media. A communications strategy which outlines how the Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills intends to include and involve children and young people in developing messages in relation to the pandemic and more broadly on matters directly affecting them should also be brought forward and published by September 2022.

### Lessons learned and post-pandemic strategy

There is a welcome acknowledgment from the Minister for Children and Education that the needs of children and young people going forward will need to be kept at the forefront in light of the fact that some key issues may not be fully understood at this time. The Minister for Children and Education has also committed extra resources to assist in the recovery process for children and young people, especially in relation to the most vulnerable children and young people in society. When questioned on how the Chief Minister would respond to any future pandemics differently it was explained that it would depend on the nature of the circumstances and what data is required to analyse this. It is also noted that the Chief Minister is of the view that the Island would be in a better position from the point of view of having better certainty of data from which to act accordingly.

The Panel's adviser concluded that a specific post-COVID-19 strategy in respect of children and young people should be brought forward to address the various cross cutting impacts which have developed as a result of the pandemic. This view is not shared by the Minister for Children and Education who is of the opinion that more focus should be placed on dealing with the issues as they exist in order to help mitigate the challenges that children have. On balance from the evidence received, the Panel has recommended that the Minister for Children and Education(s) should, as a matter of priority, develop and publish a comprehensive post-COVID-19 strategy specifically in relation to the recovery for children and young people which encompasses all key domains of their lives (e.g. education, social and emotional wellbeing, physical and mental health, economic security). The Minister(s) must also ensure that Government departments serving children's needs are sufficiently resourced in order to address the recovery of all Jersey children from the pandemic, therefore, the strategy should include a funding review, whereby budgetary allocations are more in line with those assigned to recovering the economy.

## 3. Findings and Recommendations

### 3.1 Findings

#### Finding 1

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During the focus groups, when asked for first word associations in relation to their experience of the pandemic, children and young people aged 12 – 25 raised boredom, remote learning, face masks and exams as the main themes. This contrasted to parents who raised lockdown, stress and missing family most commonly. Overall, lockdown, stress, remote learning and challenging were raised most commonly.

#### Finding 2

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Overall, 58% of respondents within the focus groups expressed a negative sentiment in relation to their experience of the pandemic. 4% expressed positive sentiment in relation to their experience. Of children and young people aged 12 – 25, 44% expressed a negative sentiment and 51% expressed factual points in relation to their experience of the pandemic.

#### Finding 3

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From the focus groups the impact on education and socialisation were identified as being the biggest challenges to children and young people as a result of the pandemic. Mental Health was also identified as a concern as well.

#### Finding 4

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The main implications for children and young people identified in respect of the pandemic arising from the focus groups included wellbeing of children, studies going online, education in general and no interaction with friends. Younger children also highlighted being bored and feeling lazy as implications as well.

#### Finding 5

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In terms of the positive impacts identified by the focus groups, spending time with family, saving money due to not going out (highlighted especially in the 20 – 25 age bracket) and the amount of free time available to young people.

#### Finding 6

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The focus groups found that Government decision making tended to frustrate and confuse children and young people and parents. The focus groups also had a mixed view of the Government communications during the pandemic (as of the time of them taking place), with younger children found to not have any awareness of them.

#### Finding 7

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In response to question one of the Panel's survey, the majority of respondents (61.78%) felt either okay or not very good in respect of the decision to close schools. Reasons given for the answers ranged from positive to negative, with the most common point raised being children and young people not being able to socialise with their friends at school.

### Finding 8

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In response to question two of the Panel's survey, the majority of respondents (57.06%) felt either satisfied or neither satisfied or unsatisfied that their needs had been met during the first lockdown between March and June 2020. Overall, 67.31% of respondents gave a positive or neutral view as to whether their needs had been met.

### Finding 9

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In response to question three of the Panel's survey, 38.91% of respondents (128) felt that they wanted help and support in relation to fun activities. 20.36% of respondents (67) felt that they needed more support in relation to school-work and 8.21% (27) respondents stated that they needed someone to talk to.

### Finding 10

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In response to question three of the Panel's survey, 32.52% of the respondents stated 'other' when identifying help and support they required following coronavirus in 2020. The majority of respondents stated that they did not need any additional help or support, with other examples including returning to the classroom and assistance for bringing home students from university.

### Finding 11

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In response to question four of the Panel's survey, many respondents highlighted the impact of the pandemic on their mental health and feeling bored or anxious as a result as well. In terms of positive responses, getting to spend time with family was highlighted most often in response to this question.

### Finding 12

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The Panel received 132 completed postcards which were designed in order to give younger children an opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings in relation to the pandemic. The majority of these were completed by children aged 4 and 5.

### Finding 13

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The majority of responses from younger children to the Panels postcard asking for their experience of the previous year of the pandemic stated a negative or neutral sentiment (83%), with 32% of respondents (42) feeling that their experience was not very good and a further 27% (35) feeling that their experience had been awful. 24% (32) felt that it had been ok.

### Finding 14

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The main themes highlighted by children in response to the postcards were children missing their friends, not being in school and being worried for family members/not being able to see them. The main positive theme that emerged were in relation to children getting to spend more time with their family as a result of having to stay at home.

### Finding 15

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The impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health was identified as one of the key issues and concerns for them. This was highlighted in submissions, the focus groups, survey and advisers report.



### Finding 16

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The Minister for Children and Education has accessed an additional £300k in 2020 and £955k in 2021 from the COVID contingency funding in order to address increased numbers of referrals and waiting times for the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service alongside other services. This has reduced the waiting times experienced to pre-pandemic levels.

### Finding 17

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The impact of the pandemic on the socialisation of children and young people was raised through the focus groups, survey and postcards, with a high number of responses explaining that children missed playing with their friends as a result of the stay-at-home order. However, the joint survey between the Children's Commissioner and CYPES found that 85% of children felt they had something fun to do during the initial lockdown. The Panel's own survey found that 38.91% (128) of respondents wanted additional support with fun activities post-lockdown.

### Finding 18

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The Panel has received evidence to highlight the increased risk on younger children's development as a result of the impact on their socialisation during the pandemic. The Government is due to address a number of residual issues in relation to children's health and wellbeing through funding allocated from the COVID-19 Health and Social Recovery funding. It is not clear, however, whether this funding will help to assist in the developmental impact around socialisation.

### Finding 19

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The Panel has received evidence to suggest that foodbank usage has increased during the pandemic for some families which is in turn having a knock-on effect on children and young people in those families. The Chief Minister has acknowledged that more information is required in this area in order to identify any increased usage and level of need. The most recent data in relation to foodbank usage is from a 2017 survey.

### Finding 20

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There is concern that a hidden section of society (aged 16-25-year-olds) could be impacted further by the pandemic due to not being able to claim the accommodation component of income support in their own right. The Chief Minister has suggested that more information is required in order to establish the potential depth of the issue.

### Finding 21

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There is widespread acknowledgement that one of largest impacts on children and young people throughout the pandemic has been in relation to their education. It is clear that considerable work has been undertaken by the Government of Jersey in order to address this impact. The full and true impact of the pandemic on children's learning may not be known, however, for some time yet.

### Finding 22

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There is widespread evidence to highlight the significant impact of the pandemic on children within the early years age bracket. This is, however, acknowledged by Government who have put in place developments in order to mitigate this impact. As with education in general, the



full and true impact of the pandemic on children within the early years age group may not be known, however, for some time yet.

### **Finding 23**

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Recognition of the emotional penalties on younger children as a result of the stay-at-home order (noting that younger children's life experience of negative impacts is significantly larger than older children and young people) is crucial to develop strategies that address these issues.

### **Finding 24**

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An increase in instances of domestic abuse and violence towards children was highlighted during the initial lockdown in 2020. The Government of Jersey undertook a media campaign to encourage members of the public to identify children at risk during the initial lockdown, however, the Panel has not seen further targeted work to address the increase in domestic violence.

### **Finding 25**

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The implementation of the Children and Families Hub was brought forward from September 2020 to March 2020 in order to provide a 'front door' for support services in relation to children and young people. This has been recognised as a positive development in the early stages of the pandemic.

### **Finding 26**

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Children and young people highlighted one of the key positives of the pandemic was being able to spend more time with their family. Flexible working arrangements have also contributed to allowing parents to spend more time with their children.

### **Finding 27**

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The Minister for Children and Education is not an automatic member of the Emergencies Council or the Competent Authorities Ministers. Whilst it is acknowledged that the Minister can be invited to attend meetings, the Panel is of the opinion that the Minister should be automatically included in the members of the two decision making bodies.

### **Finding 28**

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A number of Children's Rights Impact Assessments were undertaken at key stages during the pandemic, even though no statutory duty was in place to ensure they were completed. The Panel notes that legislation to ensure a due regard model is due to be debated at the end of March 2022.

### **Finding 29**

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The Children's Commissioner and Panel Adviser's concluded that Government did not always put children first in response to the pandemic. It is the view of the Chief Minister and Minister for Children and Education that Government has continued to meet with all groups in order to better inform its decision making.

### Finding 30

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There is a shared view across the evidence received as to what is meant by a successful corporate parent. The Government of Jersey has acknowledged this, however, concern has been raised that this may not have been at the forefront of decision making during the pandemic.

### Finding 31

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The Corporate Parenting Board did not meet between September 2020 and September 2021. It is the view of the Panel that this is not acceptable given its importance during a particularly trying time. However, the disruption within the Ministerial portfolio for children between November 2020 and June 2021 cannot be discounted as a reason for the board not meeting.

### Finding 32

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The focus groups and Panel Advisers found that a statement by the Chief Minister in November 2020 had been taken in a negative way, with some responses in the focus groups feeling that the statement had scapegoated young people for a spike in cases during that period.

### Finding 33

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It is the view of the Children's Commissioner that there was insufficient targeted messaging to children and young people during the pandemic. Successful examples were highlighted in relation to Facebook live events which children and young people engaged with, however, these only took place twice during the pandemic and as Facebook is only accessible to children aged 13 and over, this excluded any children below that age.

### Finding 34

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There are a number of actions that have been taken by the Minister for Children and Education in order to better involve children and young people in communication initiatives moving forward from the pandemic.

### Finding 35

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There is a welcome acknowledgment from the Minister for Children and Education that the needs of children and young people going forward will need to be kept at the forefront in light of the fact that some key issues may not be fully understood at this time.

### Finding 36

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The Minister for Children and Education has committed extra resources to assist in the recovery process for children and young people, especially in relation to the most vulnerable children and young people in society.

### Finding 37

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When questioned on how the Chief Minister would respond to any future pandemics differently it was explained that it would depend on the nature of the circumstances and what data is required to analyse this. It is also noted that the Chief Minister is of the view that the Island would be in a better position from the point of view of having better certainty of data from which to act accordingly.

### Finding 38

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The Panel's adviser concluded that a specific post-COVID-19 strategy in respect of children and young people should be brought forward to address the various cross cutting impacts which have developed as a result of the pandemic. This view is not shared by the Minister for Children and Education who is of the opinion that more focus should be placed on dealing with the issues as they exist in order to help mitigate the challenges that children have.

## 3.2 Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

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The Minister(s)<sup>2</sup> for Children and Education should ensure that the additional £1.25 million of funding over 2020 and 2021 that was identified from the COVID emergency funds to address waiting times and the backlog of cases in CAMHS is maintained in the base budget for the Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills within the next Government Plan 2023-26. This will provide additional funding in order to continue to reduce waiting times across the service post-pandemic.

### Recommendation 2

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The Minister(s) for Children and Education should continue to explore the means to reduce waiting times within CAMHS further. As part of this work, the Minister should, as soon as reasonably practical, identify and publish a 'gold standard' which sets out the expected waiting time for a young person accessing CAMHS services and what support they can expect to receive prior to their appointment.

### Recommendation 3

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The Minister(s) for Children and Education should, as part of a wider response to the impact of the pandemic on children and young people, undertake a review of the leisure and play activities/facilities available to children and young people in Jersey in order to address any gaps in provision and highlight what is available. This should be completed by the end of 2022, with the findings made publicly available. Further to the publication of the review, the Minister should identify an action plan with specific timescales and key milestones for any improvements identified.

### Recommendation 4

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The Minister(s) for Children and Education should ensure that, as part of the funding allocated to improve Children's Education, Health and Wellbeing within the COVID-19 Post-Emergency Strategy, sufficient emphasis is given to addressing the developmental impacts on children of all ages, but with a particular focus on very young children, that may have developed due to restrictions on socialisation during the pandemic.

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<sup>2</sup> The Panel notes that, at present, the role of Minister for Children and Education is one role as defined under Standing Orders. Noting that this role is a new role created in the current States Assembly, should the role be separated in a future government, the recommendation will apply to both Ministers and where one Minister has clear official responsibility for the area in question, it will apply to that Minister only.

### **Recommendation 5**

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The Chief Minister should ensure that research is undertaken as a matter of priority to establish the number of families that are accessing foodbanks as a result of the impact of the pandemic. This should be completed by the end of 2022.

### **Recommendation 6**

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The Government of Jersey should urgently conduct a review to assess the barriers to preventing and overcoming poverty in the Island. This should be completed by the end of 2022 in order to inform the longer-term strategy as the Island recovers from the pandemic.

### **Recommendation 7**

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The Chief Minister should, in consultation with the Minister for Social Security, establish the number of young people aged 16-25 who are ineligible for the accommodation component of income support with a view to identifying any gaps in support for this cohort as a result. This should be completed by the end of 2022 and reported back to the Children, Education and Home Affairs Panel.

### **Recommendation 8**

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The Panel commends the response of the Government in relation to addressing the impact of the pandemic on children's learning, however, acknowledges that the full impact may not be realised for some time yet. The Minister(s) for Children and Education should ensure that the impact of the pandemic on children's learning is closely monitored as a matter of priority. The Minister should ensure that monitoring does not adversely impact on children or become a burden to professionals. Additional funding should be allocated to address any emerging issues.

### **Recommendation 9**

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The Minister(s) for Children for Education should ensure the ongoing monitoring of the impacts of the pandemic in relation to the early year's cohort beyond just academic outcomes. Given the potential for issues to arise further down the line in terms of a child's development, the Minister should also ensure that this monitoring is conducted regularly and is inclusive of the child's family and professionals working with them. The Minister should ensure that monitoring does not adversely impact on children and families or become a burden to professionals. Funding should be allocated to address any emerging issues, including appropriate funding to any third-sector or arms-length organisations providing services from conception to compulsory school age.

### **Recommendation 10**

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The Minister(s) for Children and Education should, in collaboration with the Minister for Home Affairs, establish a strategy and sufficient funding for Government and third sector organisations in order to tackle the increase in domestic abuse and the impact this has had on children as a result of the pandemic. This should be completed by the end of 2022.

### **Recommendation 11**

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The Minister(s) for Children and Education should continue to ensure the Children and Families Hub is effectively resourced to ensure that the service provides a simplified access point for families, professionals and children and young people when in need of support.

### Recommendation 12

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The States Employment Board should commit to maintaining, post-pandemic, the flexible working arrangements adopted during the pandemic for States of Jersey employees. This will in turn assist in promoting the family friendly approach which has been adopted to date. The Panel would also highlight the need to avoid a culture that blends home and work together, and these arrangements need to ensure employees are not being contacted outside their working hours, so that they can focus on their children. Consideration should also be given to whether legislation accompanied by appropriate support should be put in place to enable workers in the private sector to have better access to family friendly working arrangements.

### Recommendation 13

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The Chief Minister should make the necessary legislative changes in order to include the Minister for Children and Education as an automatic member of the Emergencies Council. The Minister should also be made an automatic member of the Competent Authorities Ministers.

### Recommendation 14

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The Panel is pleased to see that Children's Rights Impact Assessments (CRIAs) have been completed during the response to the pandemic, especially in light of the lack of a statutory requirement to do so. The Council of Ministers should continue to undertake CRIAs at all key points in the response to the Pandemic as a matter of priority.

### Recommendation 15

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There appears to be a disconnect between Government and key stakeholder views as to whether the Government of Jersey has put children first throughout the pandemic. The Chief Minister has also stated that in order to understand the general assertion that the Government has not put children first, it is best to understand the detail behind it. The Panel would recommend that the Chief Minister, as soon as practicable, engages in dialogue with the Children's Commissioner to understand the view further. The Chief Minister should also wherever possible, and from the earliest stages, directly engage with children to seek their views on what they want and need, when forming policy or legislation which will affect them.

### Recommendation 16

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The Minister(s) for Children and Education should ensure that the Corporate Parenting Board continues to meet on a regular basis given its importance in respect of some of the most vulnerable children and young people in Jersey. The Minister should also ensure that a timetable of proposed meeting dates for the board is published on the Government of Jersey website as a matter of urgency in order to increase transparency.

### Recommendation 17

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Noting the progress made by Government in the utilising Facebook Live initiatives during the pandemic, the Minister(s) for Children and Education should ensure that more of these events are carried out in general to engage children and young people in communicating important information. The Minister should also continue to develop further targeted communication initiatives to engage with children and young people who are not old enough to access social media.

### **Recommendation 18**

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The Minister(s) for Children and Education should publish a communications strategy which outlines how the Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills intends to include and involve children and young people in developing messages in relation to the pandemic and more broadly on matters directly affecting them. This should be completed by September 2022 and published on the Government of Jersey website.

### **Recommendation 19**

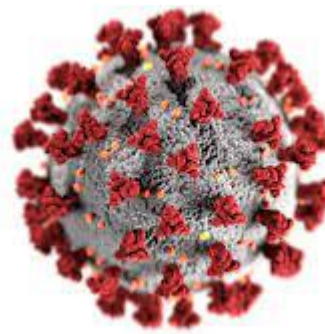
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The Minister for Children and Education(s) should, as a matter of priority, develop and publish a comprehensive post-COVID-19 strategy specifically in relation to the recovery for children and young people which encompasses all key domains of their lives (e.g. education, social and emotional wellbeing, physical and mental health, economic security). The Minister(s) must ensure that Government departments serving children's needs are sufficiently resourced in order to address the recovery of all Jersey children from the pandemic, therefore, the strategy should include a funding review, whereby budgetary allocations are more in line with those assigned to recovering the economy.

## 4. Introduction

### 4.1 Background and Context

1. On 31st December 2019 the World Health Organisation was informed of cases of pneumonia detected in Wuhan City, China. The Chinese authorities identified that this was a new type of coronavirus (2019-nCoV). Since then, Covid-19 has spread rapidly on a global scale.
2. On 11th March the World Health Organisation (WHO) made the assessment that Covid-19 can be characterised as a pandemic. The virus infects people of all ages, but evidence suggests that two groups of people are at a higher risk of getting severe Covid-19 disease. These are older people and those with underlying medical conditions.



### 4.2 Government of Jersey response

3. In response to the WHO's declaration of a pandemic, the Deputy Medical Officer of Health in Jersey advised that the Government was monitoring developments from WHO and that if any Islanders had travelled to affected countries, they should self-isolate. On 9th March, the Chief Minister advised that Jersey's contingency plans were aligned with those of the UK Government and Departments had been checking and updating their business continuity plans in case of a Covid-19 outbreak.
4. The first diagnosed case in Jersey was announced on 10th March 2020. As a result of increasing cases in the Island, schools were closed from Monday 23rd March 2020 with students accessing online learning from that point. The schools remained open to children of critical workers and those with a recorded need. The schools remained closed until 22nd June 2020 when a staggered approach was taken to return all children and young people to school.
5. The schools have since remained open given the balance of risk relating to children not being in education against the risk of transmission and spread of the virus. The Children and Families Hub was officially launched in March 2020, ahead of the proposed launch in September 2020 in order to provide support to children and families who were experiencing issues and concerns either as a result of the pandemic or more generally.

### 4.3 Key issues

6. The Review was intended to examine the impact of the following issues on children and young people up to September 2021.<sup>3</sup>
  - The impact of the school closures/lockdown/stay at home order/work for home and loss of the learning environment on children, young people, their families and home working environment, from conception to aged 25 (broken down by the various key

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<sup>3</sup> Due to the ongoing nature of the pandemic, the Panel has agreed that it should present this report up to September 2021 due to the key evidence gathering period between February 2021 and September 2021. It is noted that aspects of the response such as the vaccination of children and young people and regular lateral flow testing fell after this time and therefore are not addressed directly in this report. Addressing issues post September 2021 will form part of the legacy report from the Panel.



stages up to the age of 18 and those children and young people classed as vulnerable or high levels of needs.)

- The appropriateness or not of the decisions and actions taken by the Government of Jersey that directly related to the wellbeing of children and young people during the initial stages and subsequent stages of the pandemic (be that social, emotional or physical)
- The ethos, culture and processes in relation to children and families within key decision-making bodies such as Council of Ministers (CoM), Competent Authorities (CA), Emergencies Council (EC) and States departments, and whether children were being considered at the earliest stages and prioritised in line with the States-wide commitment to 'putting children first'
- The views of children, young people and their families on the decisions and actions that were taken to maintain their wellbeing during the initial and subsequent stages of the pandemic (between March 2020 and September 2021)
- To examine existing inequalities and identify the additional impact of the pandemic on these issues.
- How the various needs of children and young people were addressed at different stages of the pandemic (between March 2020 and September 2021).
- The ongoing workstreams that are in train to maintain the wellbeing of children and young people as the pandemic situation progresses and learn from the experiences (both positive and negative) of children and young people

### 4.4 Work Undertaken by the Panel

7. In order to inform this review, the Children, Education and Home Affairs Panel (hereafter 'the Panel') agreed that views would need to be sought from numerous sources. Most importantly, it was agreed that the views of children and young people should be directly identified and addressed as the cornerstone of the review. As a result, the following actions were taken by the Panel.
8. Focus Groups were conducted during April and May 2021 through local company 4insight. The focus groups were intended to identify the following key points and issues directly from children, young people and their parents:
  - The main challenges/negative experiences for children, young people and their families during the pandemic
  - The main successes/positive experiences for children, young people and their families during the pandemic
  - The impact of the stay-at-home order/working from home on children, young people and their families
  - Whether the physical, emotional and mental wellbeing of children and young people has been at the heart of Government
  - Decision making in line with the priority to put children first
  - What impact the response to the pandemic had on existing inequalities for children and young people plus their families
  - The perceptions of how the needs of children, young people and their families were addressed at different stages of the pandemic response

- Understanding of the work that is ongoing in order to protect the wellbeing of children, young people and their families as the pandemic response progresses
  - The perceptions of how children, young people and their families were communicated to by the Government about the response to the pandemic
9. In total, 9 focus groups were conducted with 57 participants involved. A further breakdown of the demographics of the participants and the conclusions of the groups can be found in the next section of this report. The full report can also be found in Appendix Two.
  10. The Panel conducted a public call for evidence alongside the focus groups and contacted numerous key stakeholders supporting and advocating for children and young people in the Island. In total, 14 detailed submissions from various agencies were received during the call for evidence.
  11. The Panel commissioned Dr. Ceri Brown and Dr. Michael Donnelly from the University of Bath to provide expert advice on the impact of the pandemic response on the development of children and young people. An overview of the key findings and recommendations arising from the report can be found in Section 6 and the full report can be found in Appendix One.
  12. In order to gather broader views from children and young people in relation to their experience of the pandemic, the Panel created a short survey for children and young people aged 7 - 25 to complete. In total 361 surveys were completed. An overview of the findings of the survey can be found in the next section of this report and in Appendix Three. Noting the various different ways in which children and young people communicate, especially younger children, the Panel agreed that a different approach would be taken in relation to children in Early Years settings up to the age of seven. As such, the Panel developed a 'postcard' to allow young children to provide feedback on their experience through writing, drawing a picture or choosing an 'emoji' which best summed up their feelings about the pandemic. The Panel received 132 completed postcards to inform the review. Further details of the responses can be found in the next section of this report and in Appendix Three.
  13. Finally, in order to test the evidence received, and also to gather further information from key stakeholders, the Panel held two public hearings. The first with the Children's Commissioner for Jersey in order to discuss her views and submissions further (and test some of the key points raised by the various evidence sources), and second with the Chief Minister.
  14. The Panel would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the review including all those who participated in the focus groups, 4insight for facilitating the focus groups, all the children and young people that completed a survey or postcard, all those who submitted evidence to the review and Dr. Ceri Brown and Dr. Michael Donnelly for producing a thorough and comprehensive report highlighting some of the key issues arising for children as a result of the pandemic.

## 5. Children and Young People's Views on the Pandemic

15. One of the key aspects of this review was to gather the views of children and young people directly. The Panel has undertaken this in various ways including focus groups, a short survey and postcards for completion by younger children. The following sections give a broad overview of the key points raised in relation to these various mediums of information gathering.

### 5.1 Overview of focus groups findings

16. The Panel commissioned 4insight, a local qualitative research agency, to undertake focus groups in order to gather the views of children, young people and their parents in relation to their experience of the pandemic. It is important to note, that these findings relate to the initial stages of the pandemic and up May 2021.



#### Methodology

17. The target sample for the focus groups was identified as follows:

- Children/young people in Key Stages 1 – 4 (aged 5 – 16 with parental consent and with parental assistance aged 3-5)
- Young People aged 16-25 who were in education, higher education, working or unemployed.
- Parents/Parents to be of children aged 0-3 (critical early years)
- Parents of nursery children, school children and young people.<sup>4</sup>

18. Invitations were sent out by 4insight to over 3,800 Islanders in collaboration with third sector and public sector services (schools etc.) and through promotion over social media and traditional media. Respondents were asked to contact 4insight where they were screened to an agreed questionnaire which included a broad mix of socio-demographic questions including income level, ethnicity, family situations, age etc. The screening criteria were discussed at the initial briefing meeting, along with the actual target structure for each group.<sup>5</sup>

19. In total, 9 focus groups were run with 57 participants in total. The nine groups were categorised as follows:

- 1 x 3 - 5-year-old children with their parents
- 1 x 6 - 11-year-old children with parents observing behind the mirrors
- 1 x 12 - 16-year-old children
- 1 x 17 - 19-year-olds
- 2 x 20 - 25-year-olds
- 1 x parents of 0 - 3-year-olds
- 1 x parents 3 - 10-year-olds
- 1 x parents 11 - 18-year-olds<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> 4insight report

<sup>5</sup> 4insight report

<sup>6</sup> 4insight report







Fig.2 – Parents – 68% had a negative sentiment, only 3% were positive<sup>10</sup>



Fig. 3 – Children aged 12-25 – 44% had a negative sentiment, 51% were factual<sup>11</sup>

23. From the word clouds arising from the findings of focus groups, it is noted that the most common themes put forward directly by children and young adults aged 12 – 25 differ from those put forward by parents. The Panel also notes from these findings that some of the bigger issues raised by young people relate to the themes of boredom, remote

<sup>10</sup> 4insight report

<sup>11</sup> 4insight report

learning, face masks and exams. In contrast, the bigger themes raised by parents included lockdown, stress and missing family. Overall, lockdown, stress, remote learning and challenging were raised by as the biggest themes in all groups.<sup>12</sup>

### Finding 1

During the focus groups, when asked for first word associations in relation to their experience of the pandemic, children and young people aged 12 – 25 raised boredom, remote learning, face masks and exams as the main themes. This contrasted to parents who raised lockdown, stress and missing family most commonly. Overall, lockdown, stress, remote learning and challenging were raised most commonly.

### Finding 2

Overall, 58% of respondents within the focus groups expressed a negative sentiment in relation to their experience of the pandemic. 4% expressed positive sentiment in relation to their experience. Of children and young people aged 12 – 25, 44% expressed a negative sentiment and 51% expressed factual points in relation to their experience of the pandemic.

24. In relation to the key themes that the Panel set out to understand from the focus groups, the following conclusions were drawn from children, young people/teenagers and parents:

#### Children

- The main challenges for young people were education and socialisation from the children's perspective
- The main implications for younger people were feeling lazy and bored.<sup>13</sup>

#### Young People/Teenagers

- The main challenges were education, university, mental health and socialisation.
- The main implications which the young people faced were studies going online, no interaction with friends and issues coming back to Jersey or spending too much time with family.
- In terms of positive aspects, they were positive about the amount of free time, more time to revise instead of being distracted. The 20–25-year-olds felt happy about the amount of money that they had saved during the lockdown instead of going out.<sup>14</sup>

#### Parents

- Parents felt that the main challenges for children and young people were education, socialisation and mental health.
- The main implications for parents in respect of their children were their children's wellbeing, socialisation and education.
- The main positives identified by parents were in relation to working from home and spending time with family.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> 4insight report

<sup>13</sup> 4insight report

<sup>14</sup> 4insight report

<sup>15</sup> 4insight report

25. In relation to the groups affected most by the pandemic, the respondents felt that Islanders who enjoyed sport, the older generation, teenagers and those at high risk were most affected.<sup>16</sup>
26. The Panel also wanted to understand views in relation to Government decision making during the pandemic and how that was perceived by children, young people and their parents. Overall, the focus groups concluded that Government decisions frustrated and confused both parents and young people. Furthermore, in relation to communication from Government, parents and older children felt this was mixed, with some raising positive and others negative points about how this was conducted. The Younger Children involved in the focus groups were generally unaware of the communications from Government.<sup>17</sup>

### Finding 3

From the focus groups the impact on education and socialisation were identified as being the biggest challenges to children and young people as a result of the pandemic. Mental Health was also identified as a concern as well.

### Finding 4

The main implications for children and young people identified in respect of the pandemic arising from the focus groups included wellbeing of children, studies going online, education in general and no interaction with friends. Younger children also highlighted being bored and feeling lazy as implications as well.

### Finding 5

In terms of the positive impacts identified by the focus groups, spending time with family, saving money due to not going out (highlighted especially in the 20 – 25 age bracket) and the amount of free time available to young people.

### Finding 6

The focus groups found that Government decision making tended to frustrate and confuse children and young people and parents. The focus groups also had a mixed view of the Government communications during the pandemic (as of the time of them taking place), with younger children found to not have any awareness of them.

## 5.2 Overview of survey findings

27. Noting the qualitative data collected by the focus groups, the Panel agreed that it would also seek to gather quantitative data from children and young people as well. As such, a survey was put out to all children and young people aged 7 to 25 during September 2021. This was distributed via Children, Young People, Education and Skills (CYPES) and also promoted on the States Assembly social media platforms. Children aged 16 and under were required to complete the survey with their parents in order to follow ethical guidelines. In total, 365 responses



<sup>16</sup> 4insight report

<sup>17</sup> 4insight report



were received. The breakdown of the age groups that contributed to the survey was as follows:

Age	Number of responses	Total Responses
6	0.6% (2)	2
7	5.8% (21)	21
8	4.5% (16)	16
9	8.9% (32)	32
10	27.3% (98)	98
11	1.7% (6)	6
12	1.4% (5)	5
13	1.1% (4)	4
14	7.0% (25)	25
15	21.2% (76)	76
16	5.0% (18)	18
17	0.3% (1)	1
18	0.3% (1)	1
19	0.6% (2)	2
20	0.6% (2)	2
21	0.0% (0)	0
22	0.6% (2)	2
23	0.3% (1)	1
24	0.3% (1)	1
25	0.0% (0)	0
25+	12.8% (46)	46
Total		359
Skipped		6

28. It is noted from the age breakdown, that the majority of completed surveys were undertaken by children and young people aged 16 and under, with ages 15, 10 and 9 having the highest completion rates. It should also be noted that 46 surveys (12.8%) were completed by people aged 25 plus. It is not possible to identify whether this was as a result of parents completing on behalf of their children or whether they were completing it in their own right.

29. The main objective of the survey was to capture specific views from children and young people in relation to the following key points of the review's terms of reference:

- How children and young people felt about the Government's decision to close schools and colleges during the initial lockdown between March and June 2020. This question also asked for views on closures to universities for young people studying during that time.
- Identifying whether or not young people felt their needs were met during the first lockdown between March and June 2020.
- Whether there was any help or support they required as a result of the impact of the pandemic during 2020.
- An open ended question was also included to provide the opportunity for children and young people to explain what their experience of the pandemic was like.

30. The following responses were received in relation to question one of the survey:

1. The Government made the decision that we all had to stay at home and to close Schools, Colleges and Universities for several weeks in 2020. How did this make you feel?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	☹️ - Awful		10.53%	38
2	😞 - Not very good		24.38%	88
3	😐 - Okay		37.40%	135
4	😊 - Good		14.96%	54
5	😄 - Fantastic		8.59%	31
6	Not sure / don't know.		4.16%	15
			answered	361
			skipped	4













31. In total, 361 responses were received to this question, with 4 respondents skipping the question. The majority of respondents indicated that the decision to close schools made them feel either Okay (37.40%) or not very good (24.38%). A further 14.96% stated that the decision made them feel good and 10.53% felt awful as a result. 8.59% stated that they felt fantastic as a result of the decision and 4.16% were not sure or did not know how this made them feel.

32. In respect of the reasons given for the answers, responses ranged from positive (examples included getting to spend more time with family, it kept people safe and enjoyed being at home) to negative (examples included not being able to socialise with friends, not enjoying remote learning and missing family). Not being able to socialise with friends at school was raised most often in respect of the open-ended responses.

### Finding 7

In response to question one of the Panel's survey, the majority of respondents (61.78%) felt either okay or not very good in respect of the decision to close schools. Reasons given for the answers ranged from positive to negative, with the most common point raised being not children and young people not being able to socialise with their friends at school.

33. Question two of the survey sought to identify whether children and young people felt their needs had been met during the first lockdown between March and June 2020. The following results were identified from the respondents.





2. During the first lockdown (March - June 2020) how satisfied were you that your needs were met?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	 Very satisfied		10.25%	37
2	 Satisfied		28.53%	103
3	 Neither satisfied or unsatisfied		28.53%	103
4	 Unsatisfied		11.36%	41
5	 Very unsatisfied		6.09%	22
6	Unsure / Don't know.		10.80%	39
7	Other (please specify):		4.43%	16
			answered	361
			skipped	4

34. Overall, the majority of respondents felt satisfied (28.53%) and neither satisfied nor unsatisfied (28.53%) that their needs had been met during the first lockdown. The next most common response was unsatisfied (11.36%), followed by unsure/don't know (10.80%), very satisfied (10.25%), very unsatisfied (6.09%) with 4.43% stating other. Of those that responded other, examples included home schooling being difficult and being able to do more things at home. In total, 67.31% of respondents gave a positive/neutral view as to whether their needs had been met during the first lockdown.

### Finding 8

In response to question two of the Panel's survey, the majority of respondents (57.06%) felt either satisfied or neither satisfied or unsatisfied that their needs had been met during the first lockdown between March and June 2020. Overall, 67.31% of respondents gave a positive or neutral view as to whether their needs had been met.

35. Question three of the Panel's survey asked children and young people whether there was any help or support that they needed because of things that had happened in 2020 due to coronavirus. Multiple choice options were outlined including someone to talk to, help with schoolwork, fun activities and an option for 'other' where an open ended response was invited. The findings of the multiple-choice questions were as follows:

<b>3. Is there any help or support you need because of things that happened last year due to coronavirus?</b>				
<b>Answer Choices</b>			<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Total</b>
1	Someone to talk to.		8.21%	27
2	Help with school work.		20.36%	67
3	Fun activities.		38.91%	128
4	Other (please specify):		32.52%	107
			answered	329
			skipped	36

36. In respect of the choices outlined, 38.91% of respondents (128) felt that they wanted help and support in relation to fun activities. 20.36% of respondents (67) felt that they needed more support in relation to school-work and 8.21% (27) respondents stated that they needed someone to talk to.

37. 32.52% of the respondents to question three stated other when asked what help and support they needed due to coronavirus. The main themes identified from this were that people were not sure or did not need any additional support, returning to the classroom and financial assistance for families bring children home from University.

**Finding 9**

In response to question three of the Panel’s survey, 38.91% of respondents (128) felt that they wanted help and support in relation to fun activities. 20.36% of respondents (67) felt that they needed more support in relation to school-work and 8.21% (27) respondents stated that they needed someone to talk to.

**Finding 10**

In response to question three of the Panel’s survey, 32.52% of the respondents stated ‘other’ when identifying help and support they required following coronavirus in 2020. The majority of respondents stated that they did not need any additional help or support, with other examples including returning to the classroom and assistance for bringing home students from university.

38. Question four of the Panel’s survey asked children and young people to share their experience of the pandemic and how this impacted on their thoughts, feelings and experiences. In total, 319 respondents provided a response to this question and 46 skipped the question. There was a large range of responses provided with positive examples including not being affected greatly by the pandemic and being able to spend time with family. The majority of the responses, however, were negative, with many respondents noting their mental health had been negatively impacted and feeling bored or anxious about having to stay at home. A number of responses also raised

concern over having to do schoolwork from home with some stating that this was impacting their learning.

### Finding 11

In response to question four of the Panel's survey, many respondents highlighted the impact of the pandemic on their mental health and feeling bored or anxious as a result as well. In terms of positive responses, getting to spend time with family was highlighted most often in response to this question.

## 5.3 Overview of postcard findings

39. In order to gather the views of younger children, specifically in Early Years and Nursery settings, the Panel agreed that a survey was not the most engaging or effective tool for that age group. As such, the Panel consulted with both its advisers and professionals within the Early Years sector to identify a different medium with which to gather the views of younger children, in the case of this review, specifically ages 3-7.



40. One particularly important thing to note in this regard is how younger children communicate. It is often easy to identify spoken or written communication as the most common ways to gather information, however, younger children (especially babies and pre-school children) communicate through a number of different mediums. Drawing pictures, identifying faces that represent emotions and Makaton<sup>18</sup> are all ways in which communication can be undertaken.

41. The Panel agreed that in order to capture the views of younger children it would create a 'postcard' which would be a visually engaging and child friendly document on which children could relay their feelings on the pandemic and draw a picture of what the experience of the pandemic was for them.

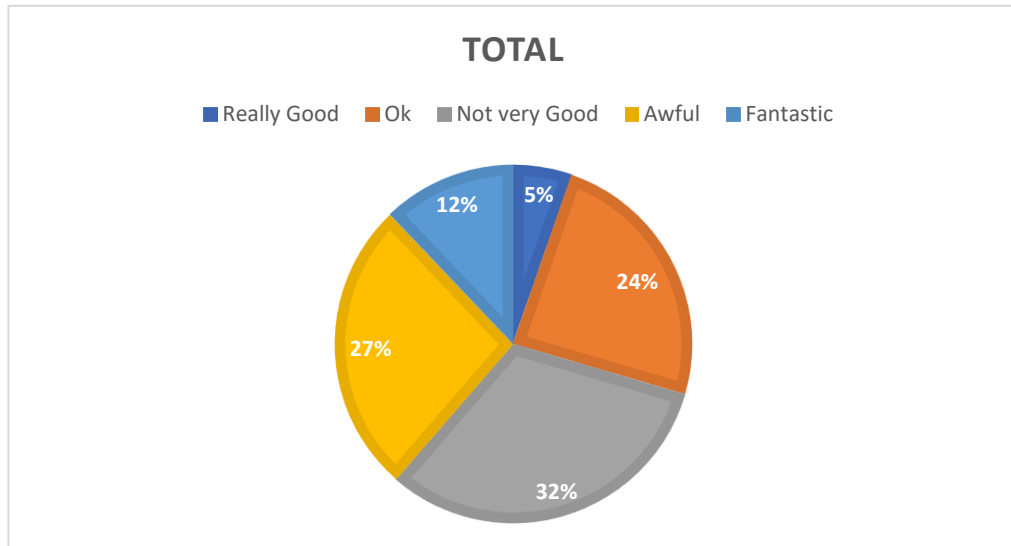
42. The postcard provided a scale of 'emojis' ranging from awful to fantastic (as demonstrated on the version above) and asked children to choose a face that best described how the previous year had made them feel. Two versions of the postcard were created, one for children in Nursery and Reception (Early Years), the other for children in Years One – Three in primary school (Key Stage One). The Key Stage One postcard asked children to let the Panel know why they had circled that face. The other side of the postcard invited children to write down or draw a picture about COVID made them feel.

43. The postcards were distributed to all States of Jersey Primary Schools in partnership with CYPES to be handed out to children in Nursery, Reception and Years 1 to 3 in September 2021 with a closing date of early October 2021. Children were asked to complete the postcard with their parents and return them to school for collection. After the closing date, the Panel received back 132 completed postcards from children and young people. On top of the 365 survey responses received, this gave a total of 497 responses from children and young people (with a deviance of 46 responses to the

<sup>18</sup> Makaton is a unique language programme that uses symbols, signs and speech to enable people to communicate – more information can be found [here](#)

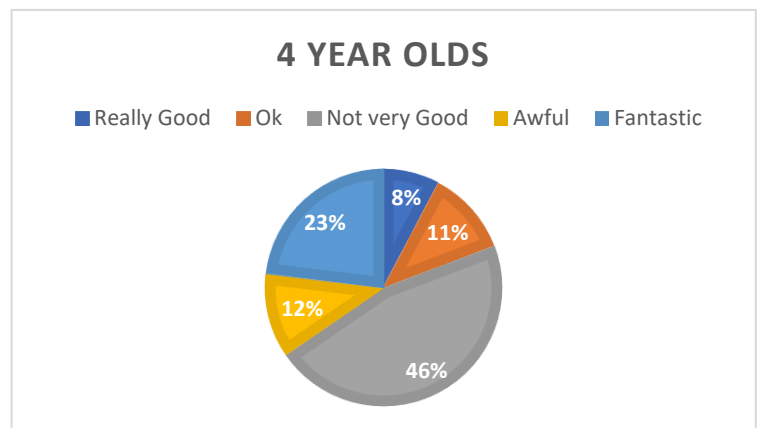
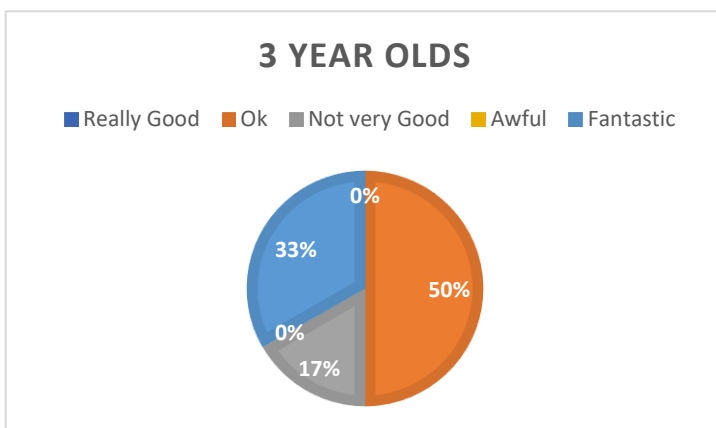
survey that stated an age over 25). The Panel would like to thank all children and young people that completed one of the postcards.

44. In terms of the responses to the first question raised by the Panel (how children and young people felt during the previous year), the responses were as follows:



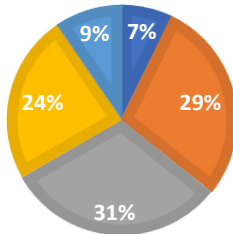
45. 32% of respondents (42) felt that their experience was not very good and a further 27% (35) felt that their experience had been awful. After that, 24% (32) of respondents stated that their experience had been Ok, with 12% (16) and 5% (7) stating that their experience had been fantastic or really good respectively. The majority of respondents, therefore, expressed a negative or neutral sentiment in relation to their experience (83%).

46. The Panel also broke down the results by age group, between ages 3 and 7. The majority of responses (42) were completed by children aged 5, followed by children aged 6 (40). 26 responses were provided by children aged 4 and only 6 responses by children aged 3. A further four responses were provided by children aged 7 and four were provided by children aged 9 (it was noted that these responses also included responses from younger children and parents had undertaken the postcard activity with their older children as well). 10 responses did not have an age attached to them but had provided a response to the emoji scale.



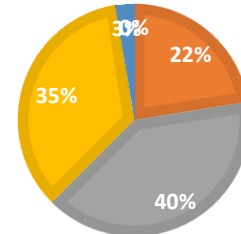
### 5 YEAR OLDS

■ Really Good ■ Ok ■ Not very Good ■ Awful ■ Fantastic



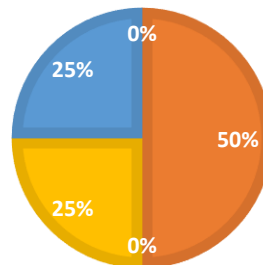
### 6 YEAR OLDS

■ Really Good ■ Ok ■ Not very Good ■ Awful ■ Fantastic



### 7 YEAR OLDS

■ Really Good ■ Ok ■ Not very Good ■ Awful ■ Fantastic



#### Finding 12

The Panel received 132 completed postcards which were designed in order to give younger children an opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings in relation to the pandemic. The majority of these were completed by children aged 4 and 5.

#### Finding 13

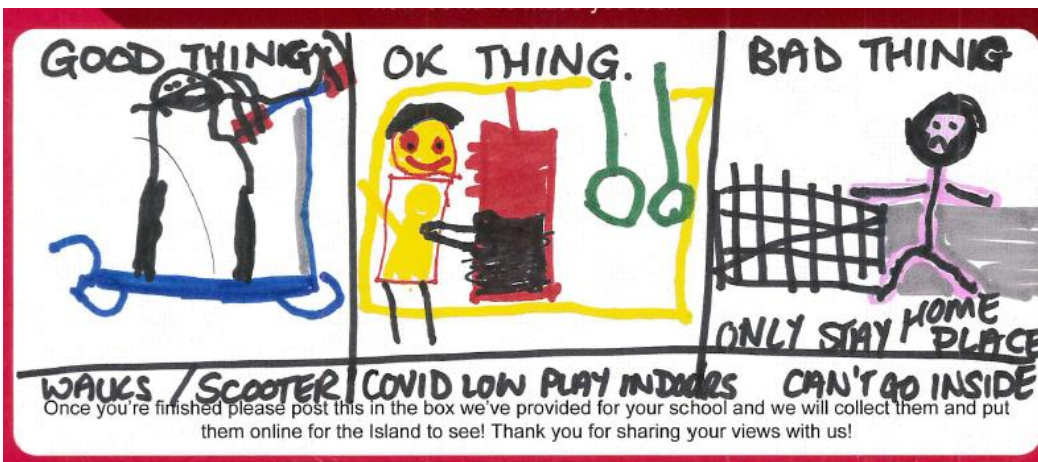
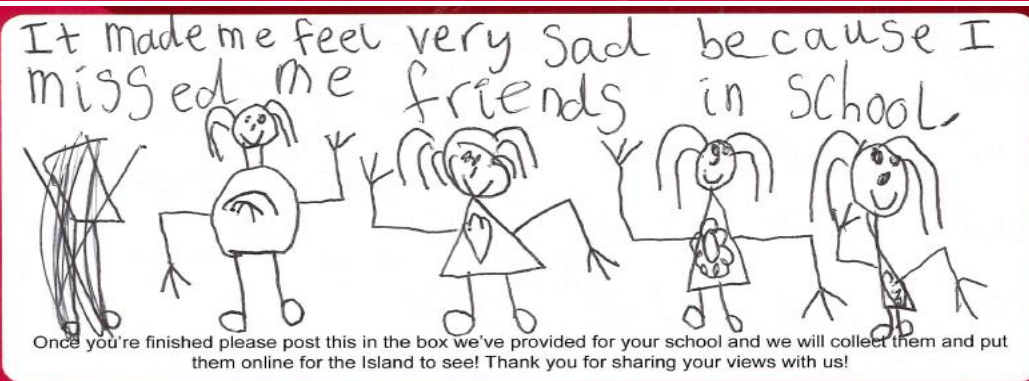
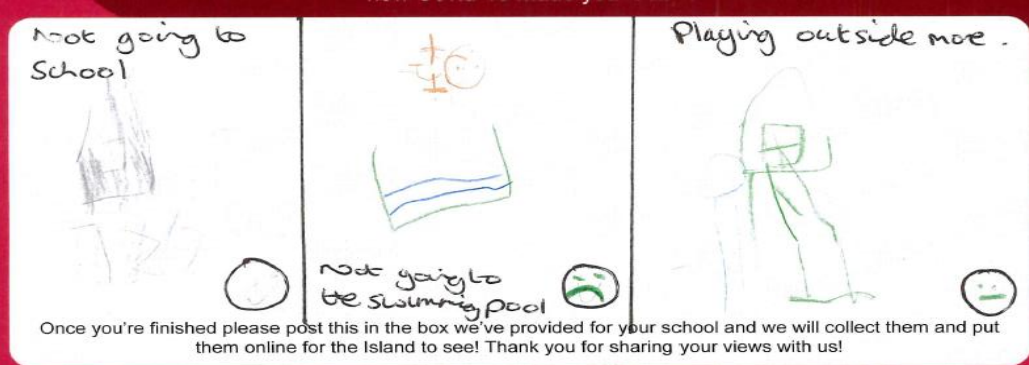
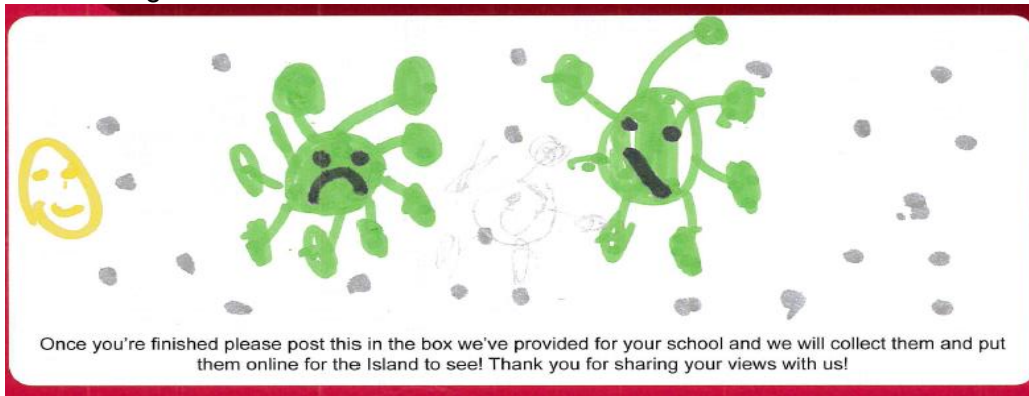
The majority of responses from younger children to the Panels postcard asking for their experience of the previous year of the pandemic stated a negative or neutral sentiment (83%), with 32% of respondents (42) feeling that their experience was not very good and a further 27% (35) feeling that their experience had been awful. 24% (32) felt that it had been ok.

47. As detailed previously, the postcards also gave children and opportunity to draw a picture or write down how COVID-19 made them feel. In total, the Panel received 100 written responses to this question and 38 pictures. The written responses mainly held a negative sentiment, with some positive aspects. The biggest themes that emerged from the responses were:

- **children missing their friends,**
- **not being in school**
- **being worried for family members/not being able to see them.**
- **The main positive themes that emerged were in relation to children getting to spend more time with their family as a result of having to stay at home.**



48. The following pictures are a couple of examples of how children wanted to express their feelings about COVID-19.



- happy to spend time with my parents
- sad I couldn't play with my friends
- sad I couldn't have a birthday party
- sad I couldn't see my grandparents.

Once you're finished please post this in the box we've provided for your school and we will collect them and put them online for the Island to see! Thank you for sharing your views with us!



covid was  
like a BIG  
holiday!

Once you're finished please post this in the box we've provided for your school and we will collect them and put them online for the Island to see! Thank you for sharing your views with us!



Sad Sad

Once you're finished please post this in the box we've provided for your school and we will collect them and put them online for the Island to see! Thank you for sharing your views with us!



not happy.

Sad I couldnt see  
my friends.

Once you're finished please post this in the box we've provided for your school and we will collect them and put them online for the Island to see! Thank you for sharing your views with us!

#### **Finding 14**

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The main themes highlighted by children in response to the postcards were children missing their friends, not being in school and being worried for family members/not being able to see them. The main positive theme that emerged were in relation to children getting to spend more time with their family as a result of having to stay at home.

## 6. Advisers' Key Findings

49. In order to identify an expert adviser to assist with this review, the Panel sent out an engagement brief to various Universities and held interviews with respondents. The Panel commissioned Dr. Ceri Brown and Dr. Michael Donnelly (the 'Panel Advisers') from the University of Bath to provide expert advice on the impact of the Government of Jersey's COVID-19 response on the development of children and young people. The following criteria was established for the expert advisers to contribute to the Panel's review:



*To provide expert knowledge and insight to the Panel to undertake an in-depth assessment of the Covid-19 response and its impact on children and young people, specifically:*

- i. An overview of the developmental needs of children and young people*
- ii. The impact of the pandemic on the developmental needs of children and which areas of their development have been most affected as a result;*
- iii. The appropriateness and adequacy of the Government of Jersey response and whether this mitigated/addressed the impact of the pandemic on the developmental needs of children and young people*
- iv. The appropriateness and adequacy of support put in place for children and young people (especially vulnerable children and young people) by the Government of Jersey in response to the pandemic*
- v. The appropriateness and adequacy of the plans being developed by the Government of Jersey in order to address the ongoing impact on children and young people going forward.*

### 6.1 Overview of report

50. Once appointed, the Panel Advisers were tasked to provide an overview of the developmental needs of children and young people during the various stages of their development. In their report, the Panel Advisers provided an overview of the needs of children in the following stages of their development:

- Child development in early years (conception to age 5)
- Middle childhood (age 6 – 12)
- Adolescence (age 12 – 17)
- Young people (age 18 – 25)

51. The second section of the Panel Advisers' report provided an evaluation of the Government of Jersey's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to inform this particular section, the Panel Advisers met with numerous Government of Jersey officials in order to understand the steps taken at various stages of the pandemic in respect of children and young people. These included Senior Leaders within CYPES (in Education, Inclusion and Children's Services), the Chair of STAC and the Medical Officer for Health. They also met with the Children's Commissioner, Executive Director of the Jersey Child Care Trust, former Minister for Education, Senator Tracey Vallois

and former Minister for Children and Housing, Senator Sam Mézec (it was agreed that as the Members were Ministers at the outset of the pandemic but resigned towards the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021 respectively, that their views on the response at that stage would be important to capture).

52. The Panel Advisers were also able to access the submissions made to the Panel from the public call for evidence, the findings of the focus groups and were provided with a large amount of background documents in respect of the Government's response to the pandemic which had been provided to the Panel throughout the various stages of the pandemic. The second section of the Panel Advisers' report focussed on the following key stages the pandemic and issues raised:

- March 2020 – June 2020
  - i. The effects of school closure on 'vulnerable children'
  - ii. Further barriers to effective learning during lockdown
  - iii. Mental and physical health impacts on children through the stay-at-home order
  - iv. The effects of lockdown on unborn babies and children in the early years
  - v. Polarisation in children's experiences during lockdown between the advantaged and disadvantaged families
  - vi. Overlooking young islanders studying at university overseas
- June 2020 – September 2020
  - i. Responding to the transitional challenges of a return to nursery
  - ii. Children's response to measures to prevent transmission of the virus, on return to school
  - iii. Efforts to support children's wellbeing 'recovery' in the return to school
  - iv. Efforts to support children's educational recovery following lockdown
- September 2020 – December 2020
  - i. Delayed action on the educational tutoring programme
  - ii. Lack of understanding about the plight of marginalised groups
  - iii. Housing for children from low incomes families
  - iv. Public perception that young people were unfairly scapegoated as the cause the autumn spike in cases
  - v. An authoritarian approach to policing young people
  - vi. Compulsory mask-wearing for secondary school aged children
- January 2021 – July 2021
  - i. Escalating waiting lists to access key therapeutic services
  - ii. Long-term impact of COVID-19 response measures on friendship

53. The third section of the Panel Advisers' report focussed on evaluating future plans of Government in relation to addressing the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's development. This gave consideration in particular to the organisational structuring of Government and the representation of children's voices, long-term strategies to recover children's education and wellbeing as well as wider impacts on household finances and associated rates of child poverty. This section focused on the following key themes:



- The voice of children and young people in Government
- A lack of long-term strategic planning for post-COVID recovery
- Recovering household finances of the poorest

## 6.2 Report conclusions

54. In concluding, the Panel Advisers highlighted the multiple and interconnected impacts of the pandemic and the Government's COVID-19 response measures upon children and young people of all ages. It was explained that the scope of these impacts has extended from social and emotional wellbeing, physical and mental health, through to educational development and work chances, and for some, economic impacts to their families that compromise the basic material necessities for children's healthy development, welfare and participation in society.
55. Furthermore, it was stated that ample evidence shows that these impacts are not attached to singular measures or effects brought about by the pandemic, but rather stem from challenges brought about to one part of children's development that can be seen to have knock-on impacts onto other aspects of their development. By way of example, it was raised how families' economic circumstances can produce a barrier to accessing essential resources needed to support children's educational progression, which may go on to affect their future participation in society and chances of securing a secure income in the future.
56. Alternatively, interruptions to children's social connection and development brought about through the various measures that have been an obstacle to children's participation in community life, can be seen to have led towards more entrenched challenges that threaten children's mental as well as physical health. This finding regarding the interconnection between developmental effects of COVID-19, was highlighted as important to speak to the question of whether to single out or pursue children's recovery according to the separate domains of children's development (for example that may fall under the different ministries). In contrast, it was argued that the deeply interconnected nature of the various impacts to children's education, health, housing and welfare highlights the need to address children's recovery to COVID-19 pandemic through a cooperative multi-agency and cross ministerial working approach.
57. In the view of the Panel Advisers, the Government has stated an explicit commitment to 'Putting Children First', however, the evidence gathered through their review has raised questions as to the extent to which this principle extends beyond the rhetoric. Furthermore, it was felt that while such a view must also be set against the competing perspective that the tide is slowly changing in this regard, the evidence presented through their review adds the appendage that such efforts have not been rapid enough to keep pace with the urgent and pressing challenges that have been brought about through the crisis of a global health pandemic. The Panel Advisers felt that of all the voices in this debate it is those of children and young people that should be listened to, and on this matter their position was clear that Government was not listening to their concerns, and when addressing the Government directly included the following comments on the Jersey response to COVID-19;

*"Be more consistent, and communicate better and explain the reasoning behind decisions"*

(4Insight young person of unidentified age)

*"[Stop] blaming young people for what they failed to prevent"*

(4Insight young person of unidentified age)



58. The Panel Advisers found evidence that suggests the Government is not always fully cognisant of its role as a corporate parent and felt this was especially alarming in a society like Jersey which has severely impoverished pockets of society - where children's needs are not being met, and where the Government clearly need to play a role. It was felt that this omission by the Government could be ideological or rest with the organisational culture of Government.
59. In the view of the Panel Advisers, it was evident, for example, from the fact that the Education officials had to make a 'case' for expenditure on vital resources which in the end took 6 months before funding was provided. It was also identified that an omission was also clear from evidence of poor access to healthcare and therapeutic services (a key mandate of UNCRC), with an unacceptable waiting list for these services having built up since the pandemic began.
60. The lifting of the ban on evictions was felt to leave open the possibility that children could face uprooting and significant stress at the worst possible time. The perceived lack of adequate outdoor play areas and unaffordability of outdoor activities assumes that all children have either the funds or their own private outdoor areas at home - which is clearly not the case, with the poorest in over-crowded homes that have no garden felt to be the ones suffering from this assumption. These were highlighted as just some examples the Panel Advisers found of where the Government has been perceived to have fallen short of its responsibility to care for the needs and development of children and young people in Jersey.
61. It was identified by the Panel Advisers that there is an unacceptable waiting list and backlog of cases for therapeutic care and mental health therapies for children and young people. It was felt that these waiting lists are crucial to address because conditions could worsen or become deep seated if they are not properly addressed from the outset. It was also highlighted that it was unacceptable that children should have to wait so long, having knock on effects for their wellbeing and development, including educational progression. Moreover, the Panel Advisers found evidence which suggested that **education itself is not prioritised in Government expenditure or given the same level of importance as other Government functions, especially economy and business**. It was explained that there is a need to properly fund education in the long term but also provide the necessary urgent funding to address the huge backlog of workload and need.
62. The Panel Advisers felt that the pandemic had brought communities together in many ways, but it also appears to have worsened intergenerational relations, bringing to the surface divisions between old and young. It was highlighted that young people were scapegoated and blamed for spikes in cases, through little to no fault of their own. A view was also put forward by the Panel Advisers that young people appear to have been harshly treated by the authorities for any divergence from the rules. Whilst it was acknowledged that people of all ages should follow the rules, it was highlighted by the Panel Advisers that **there also needs to be recognition that socialising with their peers is vital for the social and emotional development of children and young people and it was felt that not providing this opportunity is just as much of a threat to their development - and greater acknowledgement is needed of this**.

### 6.3 Recommendations

63. The conclusions of the Panel Advisers pointed to the following 6 key recommendations for policy development on the island:
1. Develop a comprehensive post-COVID-19 recovery strategy for children and young people - which encompasses all key domains of their lives (e.g. education, social and emotional wellbeing, physical and mental health, economic security)
  2. Embed the voice of children and young people more within Government (so that proper consideration is given to their situation at the outset of the policy making process).
  3. To urgently conduct a review to assess the barriers to children in poverty on the island so the recovery strategy is evidence-based, ensuring children in poverty are able to fully recover, renew and be resilient to the lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
  4. To pursue an explicit commitment on behalf of Government to assume responsibility for their role as corporate parents, to address the needs and rights of children in line with the UNCRC (it is not sufficient to rely on third sector organisations or philanthropists to fulfil this role)
  5. To ensure that Government departments serving children's needs are sufficiently resourced in order to address the recovery of all Jersey children from the pandemic, to conduct a funding review, whereby budgetary allocations are more in line with those assigned to recovering the economy.
  6. Ensure societal divisions are healed by community building initiatives – especially intergenerational divisions between old and young so that the benefits of engaged intergenerational communities can be realised.

## 7. Key issues identified

64. As a result of the evidence received by the Panel, it has identified some key issues arising from the pandemic and subsequent response from Government that require addressing. The following section will outline these key issues and provide further explanation of the need arising for children and young people and how these can be addressed as we move into the post-pandemic recovery. The key issues identified are as follows:

- Negative impacts on children and young people
- Positive actions and impacts on children and young people
- Decision making processes in relation to children and young people during the pandemic
- Putting children first and voice of the child
- Corporate Parenting during the pandemic
- Communication with children and young people
- Lessons learned and future strategy for children and young people post-pandemic

### 7.1 Negative impacts on children and young people

#### 7.1.1 Impact on Mental Health

65. Understandably, one of the main concerns raised during this review by children and young people was the impact that the pandemic, lockdowns and general uncertainty had placed on their own mental health. Indeed, of the information received by the Panel, this was highlighted in multiple areas as a key concern.



66. As discussed previously, the Panel's survey found that many respondents felt their mental health had been negatively affected.<sup>19</sup> This was also echoed in the findings of the focus groups<sup>20</sup>. The Panel's advisers also raised some concerns in relation to the impact of the pandemic on children, specifically adolescents:

*“adolescence is a time in a young person's life when their bodies are changing rapidly at the same time as they are increasingly looking outside of the family to society in negotiating their social identities. It is an especially challenging time in societies where a thin, sculpted and muscular/toned body is idealised through media and society more broadly. It was therefore concerning to hear reports of children concerned about putting on weight and feeling as though they have nobody to talk to (as mentioned both in focus groups with children and young people and by the Children's Commissioner). Weight gain could have been an inevitable consequence of public outdoor spaces being closed – the poorest groups who are least likely to have a private outdoor space and who will struggle the most in any case to pay for healthy food will have been at greatest risk here.”<sup>21</sup>*

<sup>19</sup> Panel Survey

<sup>20</sup> 4insight report

<sup>21</sup> Advisers Report

67. Concern was also raised by the Panel's Advisers in relation to the impact of loneliness, isolation and pressures at home contributing to the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health.<sup>22</sup> Concern was also raised in relation to the submission from Youthful Minds which highlighted instances where young people suffering from poor mental health had not had a consistent Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN).<sup>23</sup> Further points were raised in relation to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) not being available after 5pm.<sup>24</sup> Further concern was raised by the Panel's advisers in relation to the backlog of appointments for therapeutic services that submissions and the focus groups also stated was of concern in relation to tackling children suffering from poor mental health.<sup>25,26</sup>
68. In a submission from Brighter Futures, it was noted that the earlier mental health problems manifest, the more likely they are to persist into adulthood.<sup>27</sup>
69. The Minister for Children and Education provided an overview to the Panel of the steps that were taken in the early stages of the pandemic, and more recently, in relation to addressing the impact it has had on children and young people's mental health. It was explained that in 2020, funds from the central covid response contingency of c£300k were accessed to bring in extra staff to manage the backlog of cases, increase funding for families waiting, to support staff resilience and mental health, upskill staff in particular areas of need and provide early intervention and resilience support in primary schools.<sup>28</sup>
70. Furthermore, the Minister explained that, in 2021 additional funding of c£955k was confirmed to ensure a new duty and assessment team was put in place within CAMHS. Within the Minister's submission it was noted that an increased number of referrals had been received during the pandemic (approx. 850) which this additional funding was designed to address.<sup>29</sup> As a result, the Panel was informed that CAMHS waiting times were reduced to pre-pandemic levels.<sup>30</sup> It is also noted that [Kooth](#)<sup>31</sup> was commissioned in order to offer free online counselling support for children and young people.<sup>32</sup>
71. The Panel suggests that work continues to address the concerns around waiting lists, although it is pleased to see that additional funding has addressed the immediate concern raised through advisers and submissions in relation to lengthy waiting times.

### Finding 15

The impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health was identified as one of the key issues and concerns for them. This was highlighted in submissions, the focus groups, survey and advisers report.

<sup>22</sup> Advisers Report

<sup>23</sup> Submission - Youthful Minds

<sup>24</sup> Submission - Youthful Minds

<sup>25</sup> Advisers Report

<sup>26</sup> 4insight report

<sup>27</sup> Submission – Brighter Futures

<sup>28</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education

<sup>29</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education

<sup>30</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education

<sup>31</sup> Kooth is an online counselling and support service that the Government partnered with during the pandemic

<sup>32</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education

## Finding 16

The Minister for Children and Education has accessed an additional £300k in 2020 and £955k in 2021 from the covid contingency funding in order to address increased numbers of referrals and waiting times for the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service alongside other services. This has reduced the waiting times experienced to pre-pandemic levels.

### Recommendation 1

The Minister(s) for Children and Education should ensure that the additional £1.25 million of funding over 2020 and 2021 that was identified from the COVID emergency funds to address waiting times and the backlog of cases in CAMHS is maintained in the base budget for the Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills within the next Government Plan 2023-26. This will provide additional funding in order to continue to reduce waiting times across the service post-pandemic.

### Recommendation 2

The Minister(s) for Children and Education should continue to explore the means to reduce waiting times within CAMHS further. As part of this work, the Minister should, as soon as reasonably practical, identify and publish a 'gold standard' which sets out the expected waiting time for a young person accessing CAMHS services and what support they can expect to receive prior to their appointment

## 7.1.2 Impact on Socialisation

72. Another common theme identified by children and young people in response to the focus groups, survey and postcards was that not being able to see their friends and family was a difficult part of the pandemic. Whilst this relates mainly to the initial lockdown between March 2020 and June 2020, there are some key points that have also been raised in terms of longer-term impacts as well.



73. One point was raised by the Jersey Association of Home Educators in relation to the impact on socialisation of children and young people who were educated at home:

*During the stages of the pandemic where children were permitted to return to school however, socialising outside of school was very restricted, it felt as though our community "slipped between the cracks". It became increasingly challenging for our home educating community or "bubble" to socialise our children together, even outdoors. The children's usual recreational activities were paused for a significant period and our community were compelled to be very creative in order for our children to keep in touch their friends (e.g. video calls, messaging, letter writing).<sup>33</sup>*

74. Further instances of concerns around socialisation of children were raised in the focus groups. Examples included:

<sup>33</sup> Submission – Jersey Association of Home Educators

*“They put a lot of restrictions on socialising, it affected the younger generation, affected universities and going out, economy a massive impact like businesses running down and our generation will be those who will pay for it in taxes for a few years to come.”*  
**(22-year-old, university student)<sup>34</sup>**

*“I can’t play with kids in other classes, can’t pop their bubble.”*  
**(10-year-old)<sup>35</sup>**

*“Bad, really wanted to go outside, to play.”*  
**(6-year-old)<sup>36</sup>**

75. The Children’s Commissioner explained in her submission that Article 31 of the UNCRC states that children and young people have the right to have fun in the way they want to, whether by playing sports, watching films, or doing something else entirely.<sup>37</sup> It was noted, however, that the pandemic meant that children’s options for play, rest and leisure were severely restricted. Restrictions included, the closure of youth clubs, drama and singing groups, extra-curricular activities and clubs, despite schools being open. It was felt that this will have been a difficult logic for many children to understand, and the impact on wellbeing will have been universal.<sup>38</sup> However, it was noted from the joint survey between the Children’s Commissioner and CYPES that 85% of children said they had something fun to do during the initial lockdown.<sup>39</sup>
76. Interestingly, in response to the Panel’s survey, 38.91% (128) respondents explained that they wanted help or support with fun activities. Given the initial survey of CYPES and the Children’s Commissioner was conducted in 2020, and the Panel’s own survey was just over a year later (and acknowledging the difference in sample size) it raises a question as to whether the initial feeling in relation to having something fun to do has been maintained during the pandemic.<sup>40</sup> Noting the view from the survey, the Panel would suggest that more work is undertaken to identify the current offering for children and young people of all ages in the Island in terms of leisure and play activities/facilities in order to address any gaps in provision and also to highlight what is available.

### Finding 17

The impact of the pandemic on the socialisation of children and young people was raised through the focus groups, survey and postcards, with a high number of responses explaining that children missed playing with their friends as a result of the stay-at-home order. However, the joint survey between the Children’s Commissioner and CYPES found that 85% of children felt they had something fun to do during the initial lockdown. The Panel’s own survey found that 38.91% (128) of respondents wanted additional support with fun activities post-lockdown.

<sup>34</sup> 4insight report

<sup>35</sup> 4insight report

<sup>36</sup> 4insight report

<sup>37</sup> Submission – Children’s Commissioner

<sup>38</sup> Submission – Children’s Commissioner

<sup>39</sup> Submission – Children’s Commissioner

<sup>40</sup> Panel Survey



### Recommendation 3

The Minister(s) for Children and Education should, as part of a wider response to the impact of the pandemic on children and young people, undertake a review of the leisure and play activities/facilities available to children and young people in Jersey in order to address any gaps in provision and highlight what is available. This should be completed by the end of 2022, with the findings made publicly available. Further to the publication of the review, the Minister should identify an action plan with specific timescales and key milestones for any improvements identified.

77. Another point that was raised in relation to the impact of socialisation was in respect of very young children and the developmental impact the pandemic could have on them. The Panel's Advisers noted the following in relation to children developing secure attachments in their early years:

*If the child develops a secure attachment relationship with their primary caregiver they will foster a self-belief that the world is inherently trustworthy and that people are worthy of trust. When the child inevitably encounters stressful, threatening, or challenging situations down the line, they will feel able to cope with their own emotional responses and to seek support from others. Unfortunately, however, the opposite is also the case; when children develop an insecure attachment to their attachment figure, they are less likely to trust in the world and the future significant relationships that they go on to develop.<sup>41</sup>*

78. It is noted that, there are two opposing points in relation to the initial lockdown, the first being that increased time with parent/carers for young children could in fact increase the bond and secure attachment of the child. The opposite is also true in that stressful situations brought about by the pandemic could in turn lead to parents being unable to give the same level of care to their child.<sup>42</sup>
79. The Panel notes that this view has been taken into account by CYPES and Government and the response has provided that children are kept in educational settings wherever possible. Whilst this is mainly in relation to educational outcomes, the importance of the socialisation element, especially in younger children and their development is a key area to continue to address. The Government's recently published COVID-19 Post-Emergency Strategy has identified key areas that have been signed off in relation to the Covid-19 Health and Social Recovery funding, which includes projects looking at children's mental health and wellbeing. It is important that the impact on socialisation is covered within this response as well.

### Finding 18

The Panel has received evidence to highlight the increased risk on younger children's development as a result of the impact on their socialisation during the pandemic. The Government is due to address a number of residual issues in relation to children's health and wellbeing through funding allocated from the COVID-19 Health and Social Recovery funding. It is not clear, however, whether this funding will help to assist in the developmental impact around socialisation.

<sup>41</sup> Advisers Report

<sup>42</sup> Advisers Report

#### Recommendation 4

The Minister(s) for Children and Education should ensure that, as part of the funding allocated to improve Children's Education, Health and Wellbeing within the COVID-19 Post-Emergency Strategy, sufficient emphasis is given to addressing the developmental impacts on children of all ages, but with a particular focus on very young children, that may have developed due to restrictions on socialisation during the pandemic.

#### 7.1.3 Impact of the Pandemic on Poverty

80. One area highlighted to the Panel throughout the review was the impact of the pandemic on housing and poverty and the knock-on effect this had on children and young people. This was highlighted especially in relation to the more disadvantaged families in Jersey.



81. The Panel's Advisers noted the following in relation to the impacts of poverty in relation to learning opportunities for children and young people both during the initial lockdown and throughout the pandemic in general:

*For those facing severe material deprivation, a lack of quality housing, poor nutrition, and stress/anxiety at home (all worsened by the pandemic) make them ill-prepared to fully engage with education initiatives like tutoring. Indeed, a host of research shows how factors associated with poverty (like not having a good quality breakfast to start the day) all make children ill-equipped to focus and concentrate on their learning. Whilst initiatives like the recovery curriculum and tutoring programme will provide benefits universally to all children, we could not see much evidence of any targeted initiatives specifically addressing the needs of the marginalised pockets of Jersey society, like EAL children and those facing severe material deprivation.<sup>43</sup>*

82. Furthermore, the Panel Adviser's recommended that the Government of Jersey urgently conducts a review to assess the barriers to children in poverty on the Island, so the recovery strategy is evidence-based, ensuring children in poverty are able to fully recover, renew and be resilient to the lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>44</sup>

83. In the Children's Commissioner's submission, she highlighted the following points in relation to the impact of poverty:

*During 2020 more than one third (36%) of households reported that their finances had deteriorated due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with half (50%) of the households in non-qualified rental accommodation reporting a deterioration in their household finances. Further, when asked, more than a quarter (27%)*

<sup>43</sup> Adviser's Report

<sup>44</sup> Adviser's Report

*of households expected their financial situation to get worse over the next 12 months.<sup>45</sup>*

84. In following up this information, the Commissioner provided examples of how poverty was impacting children during a public hearing:

*Anecdotally, we are seeing more families at the foodbank. One foodbank alone sees on average about 30 families a week. On some occasions children are queuing up at the foodbank in their school uniform to take food home to mum or whoever it happens to be at home. So we know that poverty is having an impact on their access to food, but it is also having a massive impact on access to housing.<sup>46</sup>*

85. The Panel questioned the Chief Minister and Minister for Children and Education on this point in relation to an increase in families accessing foodbank. The Chief Minister provided the following response:

**Chief Minister:**

*The issue around foodbanks I do not think we have bottomed out in terms of data, and I will probably have to go back to that because again it is trying to understand the position. This is an observation, it is more difficult in the U.K. (United Kingdom) as the access to foodbanks is quite restricted and quite controlled, I believe, and I cannot remember the period, but it is for a very limited number of days under certain circumstances. Over here we do not do that at all, and it is done through the charitable side. For example, if I have understood matters correctly, and I might be wrong here because it is about timing, the only report that we have ever released, as far as I can see, or the most recent one, is back in 2017, which for example cites Grace Trust specifically. It gives the number of food bags provided, around 300-odd, from one quarter to the other, and the number of individual people visiting is around 180. Whereas, if I have understood it correctly, the more recent notice that was put out was referring to, I think, 129 people/visits, which is notionally less - please note the word "notionally" - but also significantly more bags given, which is an interesting change. It implies that in overall terms fewer people were accessing it, but they were accessing it more, if that is a valid comparison.<sup>47</sup>*

86. The Panel notes that the position of the Chief Minister in response to the notion of additional families accessing food banks is that more information is needed to highlight the level of need. It is noted that the previous data collected on this point is from 2017, so a further assessment is required to establish the level of need at this stage as a matter of priority.

## Finding 19

The Panel has received evidence to suggest that foodbank usage has increased during the pandemic for some families which is in turn having a knock-on effect on children and young people in those families. The Chief Minister has acknowledged that more information is required in this area in order to identify any increased usage and level of need. The most recent data in relation to foodbank usage is from a 2017 survey.

<sup>45</sup> Page 7, Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle Survey Report 2020, Statistics Jersey available at <https://www.gov.je/SiteCollectionDocuments/Government%20and%20administration/R%20Opinions%20and%20Lifestyle%20Survey%202020%20Report%2020200903%20SJ.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Public Hearing – Children’s Commissioner – 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022 – p.14

<sup>47</sup> Public Hearing – Chief Minister – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022 – p.17 and 18

### Recommendation 5

The Chief Minister should ensure that research is undertaken as a matter of priority to establish the number of families that are accessing foodbanks as a result of the impact of the pandemic. This should be completed by the end of 2022.

### Recommendation 6

The Government of Jersey should urgently conduct a review to assess the barriers to preventing and overcoming poverty in the Island. This should be completed by the end of 2022 in order to inform the longer-term strategy as the Island recovers from the pandemic.

87. One final point in relation to ‘hidden’ poverty was raised in relation to 16-25-year-olds who may not live at home with parents and are, therefore, ineligible for income support. The Panel raised this issue with the Chief Minister during a public hearing:

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

*... there are 16 to 25 year-olds who do not qualify for income support. You must recognise that there is a section there that does not have that income support backing that you emphasised earlier and we just wondered whether you are aware of any effects of the pandemic on those young people. The worst-case scenario is it could be a hidden effect that none of us know about and it is happening anyway.*

**The Chief Minister:**

*That is why what would be helpful to know from you is how many people you think are affected and the evidence you have on that front. That is quite important because obviously, for the sake of argument, if there are 200 people involved and there is a real issue there versus if it was 5, then obviously one would want to know the context because there are different approaches required in terms of the different scale. I am very happy to go back to Social Security and get you a more formal answer.<sup>48</sup>*

88. During factual accuracy checking for the report, the Chief Minister provided the Panel with additional information in relation to the point raised about 16-25 year olds as follows:

*Young adults who have lived in Jersey for 5 years in their own household are eligible to make a claim for income support from school leaving age.*

*The only area of Income support where special rules apply to those under 25 is in relation to accommodation costs.*

*Accommodation components of Income support are only paid to claimants under the age of 25 in certain circumstances.<sup>49</sup>*

89. Within the [Income Support Policy Guidelines](#) it states that accommodation components of income support can only be paid to claimants under the age of 25 in certain circumstances.<sup>50</sup> The Panel notes that 16-25 year olds are able to make a claim

<sup>48</sup> Public Hearing – Chief Minister – 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2022

<sup>49</sup> Response from Chief Minister – 17<sup>th</sup> March 2022

<sup>50</sup> Income Support Policy Guidelines – p.48

in their own right, however, unless they meet the criteria within the guidelines, they are ineligible for the accommodation component.

### Finding 20

There is concern that a hidden section of society (aged 16-25-year-olds) could be impacted further by the pandemic due to not being able to claim the accommodation component of income support in their own right. The Chief Minister has suggested that more information is required in order to establish the potential depth of the issue.

### Recommendation 7

The Chief Minister should, in consultation with the Minister for Social Security, establish the number of young people aged 16-25 who are ineligible for the accommodation component of income support with a view to identifying any gaps in support for this cohort as a result. This should be completed by the end of 2022 and reported back to the Children, Education and Home Affairs Panel.

#### 7.1.4 Impact on Education

89. The impact of the pandemic on education has been one of the largest in terms of affecting children and young people. The Panel received substantial information in numerous submissions that highlighted this. The Minister for Children and Education outlined a number of key impacts that had been felt in relation to children's education including:



- The impact on the education estate of the enforced move to 'remote learning' impacted variably on settings. For example, the BAU roll out of MS Teams was well in place at Highlands College, and infrastructure was 'near ready' in secondary schools. The primary estate was not, but rapidly moved to develop responses, at variable speed. High levels of digital poverty were exposed in the Island. This was addressed in phases both at the CYPES/Treasury level and by individual schools. In both cases, partners, charities and philanthropic donors were key, as well as the direct investment by the Government.
  - There was a major impact on assessment, as teachers could not do peer moderation, and especially on examinations. As well as losing access to the cancelled Year 6 curriculum tests, two years of terminal examinations in GCSEs, A levels and other Level 2 and 3 qualifications were lost. These were replaced by Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs) in 2020 and by Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) in 2021. Schools and the Department worked to ensure that young people's life chances for their next steps were not hindered. A level and IB cohorts of students in both years were successful in moving to HE, FE or work.<sup>51</sup>
90. Furthermore, in a submission from Senator Mézec, the following key points were raised in relation to the impact of education and the concerns around the fact that children were losing contact with the many professionals they engaged with daily:

<sup>51</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education



*The most visible of these challenges was the closure of Jersey's schools, and the difficulties that then posed on delivering an education to all our children. But less visible was the impact on safeguarding that we feared may occur as children suddenly lost contact with many of the professionals they encountered on an almost daily basis before. Trying to make sure that children were not being left in situations where their vulnerability was exacerbated was something that was very difficult to do, especially given the circumstances we were working in, which had been completely unexpected and were frequently changing.<sup>52</sup>*

91. Every Child Our Future (ECOF) provided a detailed submission which examined the impact of the pandemic on children's attainment, especially in relation to literacy and numeracy. They raised the following point in relation to the exacerbated impact on disadvantaged children in relation to their education:

*Globally, the most reported and robust findings are that Covid-19 has had a negative effect on progress and attainment. A "best case" scenario is exemplified by the Netherlands with a short lockdown, equitable school funding, and world-leading rates of broadband access. Despite these favourable conditions, primary school students made little or no progress while learning from home across the basics of maths, spelling and reading. Learning loss was most pronounced among students from disadvantaged homes with children among less-educated households, the size of the learning slide is up to 60% larger than in the general population.<sup>53</sup>*

92. Interestingly, one area that was highlighted as not being as adversely affected was in relation to children that were home schooled. The Jersey Association of Home Educators explained that this community was able to continue educating their children in same manner as prior to the pandemic and continued to thrive in their usual learning environments.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, it was highlighted that children benefitted from increased time with their parents as a result of the stay-at-home order.<sup>55</sup> As previously stated, however, the impact on socialisation for these children was more profound given the lack of access to other activities.

93. The focus groups highlighted numerous challenges in relation to the impact on education that was felt by children and young people. It was also noted that it was often more difficult for older children, whereas parents with younger children felt that school-based education wasn't an immediate priority and that they would be able to catch up in the near future.<sup>56</sup> Examples included the following:

*"My daughter has tonnes of work, year 13 now, one teacher she can't get along with, just couldn't get help, screaming and shouting, slamming doors, first lockdown horrendous, school point horrendous geared up for exams. Don't know if she's going to pass or not, they changed teachers around."<sup>57</sup>*

*"Home schooling was absolutely horrendous, working from home as a single parent, pressure of my job, 3 year old didn't get it - she just wanted to play. The mental health side of not being with friends and no structured school day, no*

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<sup>52</sup> Submission – Senator Mézec

<sup>53</sup> Submission – Every Child Our Future

<sup>54</sup> Submission – Jersey Association of Home Educators

<sup>55</sup> Submission – Jersey Association of Home Educators

<sup>56</sup> 4insight report

<sup>57</sup> 4insight report



*challenge for her, she became bored, my stress came out on them because of work.*<sup>58</sup>

*"They hated the measures, hated the masks. They don't have to wear them but don't want teachers wearing them. It's like a hospital. I now go out my way to smile with my eyes.*"<sup>59</sup>

*"I study in a digital workplace, after 2 weeks of online studying, we had Zoom fatigue, being online 8 hours a day, no socialising and no group work, more tiring definitely."*<sup>60</sup>

94. As identified in the Panel's survey, 20.36% of respondents (67) felt that they needed more support in relation to school-work as a result of the pandemic. It should be noted, however, that schools were kept open as fully as possible in 2020, and, except for the first week, fully in 2021. With the enforced lockdown in 2020, the Government maintained provision for face-to-face schooling for the children of critical workers and some groups of vulnerable children.<sup>61</sup> The Minister for Children and Education also provided an overview of the support that was put in place by CYPES in order to tackle the impact on education:

*In 2021, a programme of interventions was organised and run from the autumn term of 2020 through to December 2021, funded by the Government of Jersey to the sum of £1.4 million. These included*

- *Jersey Tutoring Programme*
- *OLEVI (teacher training programme)*
- *Reading Recovery*
- *Mathematics Recovery Programme*
- *A Schools' 'catch-up' programme will continue in 2022 and 2023*<sup>62</sup>

95. Furthermore, the Minister also provided an overview of the other support and interventions that were undertaken by the Government of Jersey in order to address the impact on education:

- In 2020 the creation of 'Learning at Home' website and many resources to support parents, carers and students further learn from home.
- Online learning continued though out lockdown and supported teachers through this: Teams, Tapestry, google classroom and other platforms streamlined to ensure that all schools had online services.
- In spite of Covid pressures, standards in Early Years and primary education were maintained in line with pre-Pandemic (2019) and dramatically improved GCSE and A level results.
- To December 2021, the Jersey Tutoring Programme has delivered 12,053 hours of individual and small group tutoring. Despite the challenges of recruitment, the JTP has already supported approximately 30% of pupils in GoJ (non-fee paying) schools.
- Virtual School established for all Children Looked After pupils linking to Social Care & Education both on and off Island with PEPs in place.

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<sup>58</sup> 4insight report

<sup>59</sup> 4insight report

<sup>60</sup> 4insight report

<sup>61</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education

<sup>62</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education

- Full engagement with the EOTAS (Education Other Than At School) community and recognition that those educated by families at home should be deemed EHE (Elective Home Education)
  - Strengthened the Reading Recovery Programme and introduced the Mathematics Recovery Programme with partners ECOF. Implementation of Virtual Visits, to replace suspended school reviews.
  - Implementation of Virtual Visits, to replace suspended school reviews.
  - Funded approximately 600 new laptops in 2021 through government and charitable donations.
  - Nasen Review still took place to ascertain a full review of Inclusion in Education on Jersey to ensure that there is future equality of provision for all.
  - All SENCo's commenced NasenCo qualification affiliated to Winchester University
  - Re-development of the Schools Councils to get the Child's Voice using Teams
  - Dedicated support to existing Jersey HE students away at university and beyond included direct liaison with the UK Government on travel restrictions, and support where needed for Covid –secure accommodation on return to Jersey for breaks.<sup>63</sup>
96. The Minister also explained to the Panel that the establishment of extended online learning resources for families was well received.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, business continuity planning was seen as crucial with the Minister noting that schools and their leaders became experts in infection control, PPE, health mitigations, contact tracing and so much more as they worked across government to meet the challenges.<sup>65</sup>
97. A final point raised by ECOF was especially important to consider in relation to the ongoing management and response in relation to the impact of the pandemic on children's education:

*That is that it (the Government of Jersey) delivers a clear and honest analysis of the impact on local education and commits to an ambitious and fully fundable roadmap for how it is not only going to make good the negative impacts but also reach the goal of offering Jersey children a world class education.<sup>66</sup>*

### Finding 21

There is widespread acknowledgement that one of largest impacts on children and young people throughout the pandemic has been in relation to their education. It is clear that considerable work has been undertaken by the Government of Jersey in order to address this impact. The full and true impact of the pandemic on children's learning may not be known, however, for some time yet.

### Recommendation 8

The Panel commends the response of the Government in relation to addressing the impact of the pandemic on children's learning, however, acknowledges that the full impact may not be realised for some time yet. The Minister(s) for Children and Education should ensure that the impact of the pandemic on children's learning is closely monitored as a matter of priority. The Minister should ensure that monitoring does not adversely impact on children or become a burden to professionals. Additional funding should be allocated to address any emerging issues.

<sup>63</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education

<sup>64</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education

<sup>65</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education

<sup>66</sup> Submission – ECOF

### 7.1.5 Impact on Early Years



98. A number of submissions spoke of the impact on the early years setting and younger children in the conception to pre-school years. There was a mixed view in relation to the impact, with some speaking positively of the Government's response and other points raising concern in relation to the impacts that could occur for children.
99. The Jersey Child-Care Trust, provided the following point in relation to their view on the impact on children and response of Government:

*Aside from this and more generally, there was a swift, flexible, inclusive and efficient response from Government to enable the re-opening of early years settings for children deemed as 'vulnerable'. The Government's category of 'vulnerable' included every child that we supported with SEND or additional needs and in 2020, this totalled circa 120 children and their families. We were grateful for our close communication with the Government Department, Childcare and Early Years Service (CEYS) in our role supporting and funding children in registered Day Nurseries and Pre-schools and we felt informed and included. This continued throughout lockdown and beyond, enabling a collaborative approach for the exit strategy too.<sup>67</sup>*

100. Every Child Our Future also raised the following view in relation to the Common Strategic Policy and the importance of recognising the added impact on disadvantaged children and young people:

*Early Years. The 2018-2022 Common Strategic Policy states that recognition will be given to "the critical importance of children's experiences in the first few years of their lives – understanding that it lays the foundation for their future development and can be predictive of future outcomes". Disadvantaged children start school already up to a year behind their more affluent peers and, anecdotally, there is evidence from teachers in the UK that shows growing concerns about development gaps.<sup>68</sup>*

101. The Panel's advisers raised the following point in relation to the key impacts on toddlers and young children as a result of their research and conversations with key stakeholders:

*For toddlers and young children known to Jersey, the concerns brought about during lockdown conferred to children's emerging social and personal development. Parents canvassed both through the scrutiny review and the Government's own reporting channels indicated a common a belief that young children's emotional wellbeing has been much worse affected than adults.<sup>69</sup>*

102. It was further explained by the Panel's advisers that anecdotal reports highlighting the emotional penalties of the stay-at-home order on young children and babies, for whom the period represents a far greater proportion of their overall life experience, in turn

<sup>67</sup> Submission – JCCT

<sup>68</sup> Submission – ECOF

<sup>69</sup> Adviser's report

sets a precedence for their expectations and interactions with others in future relationship building.<sup>70</sup> The Panel's advisers also noted the following view from experts that they spoke to during the review:

*Early Childhood experts on the island have called for the, 'the importance of making high quality support for families and children integral to Jersey's recovery plans, and ensuring that those families who are most at risk can sustain safe, stable and nurturing relationships' (Best Start Partnership 2020 p14)<sup>71</sup>*

103. Another point that was raised by the Best Start Partnership in relation to the impact on early years, focussed on the disruption to children's lives in terms of the relationships that they held with caregivers:

*Children's lives were disrupted when childminders stopped working and children very suddenly either had to go to new settings or stay at home. When a nursery was closed some children were enrolled in other nurseries as their teacher parents had to go back when the schools reopened. Some children then returned to their original nursery when it reopened. Changes of teachers, key workers and setting were experienced by young children without the opportunity for preparation and induction.<sup>72</sup>*

104. The postcard results received by the Panel also pointed towards younger children's experience of the pandemic and its impact as predominately 'not very good' or 'ok' (especially amongst 3-4-year-olds).<sup>73</sup>

105. The Minister for Children and Education provided the following overview of the support that had been put in place in order to address the impacts on early years settings for children and young people:

- 2-year funded programme (£330,000 per year) to support three key areas identified through our engagement with families and children and the workforce.
- Support for children and parent's social and emotional well-being through group activities, family information hub and 50 things to do before you are 5 app.
- Integrated offers of both universal and targeted offers for families will be co-ordinated and facilitated.
- 20 more families accessed the Best Start Nursery Plus programme for 2–3-year-olds.
- Workforce development and training opportunities to impact positively on children's outcomes. SEND (Special Education Needs and Disability) leadership, higher level qualifications and joint CPD with health, voluntary and community sectors.
- Support for language and communication skills, promotion of physical well-being and support for children's personal development, e.g., with managing toileting.
- Funding agreed for two transition workers.
- In the Early Years, as with schools and colleges, although some key activities had to be scaled back for safety reasons (e.g. singing and soft toys) staff worked creatively and tirelessly to deliver an effective early years' curriculum. For example, when whole group/room/class bubbles were organised to support a typical day for children in the early years to minimise the anxiety in young children.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Adviser's report

<sup>71</sup> Adviser's report

<sup>72</sup> 42 Days ad counting: Lockdown babies & young children – Best Start Partnership Briefing Paper

<sup>73</sup> Postcard response

<sup>74</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education

106. Whilst it is acknowledged that significant work has been done to try and mitigate the negative effects on the early years age group, as with education in general, the full impacts on children in this age group may not be known for some time. This is important to note when considering responding to the impact.

### Finding 22

There is widespread evidence to highlight the significant impact of the pandemic on children within the early years age bracket. This is, however, acknowledged by Government who have put in place developments in order to mitigate this impact. As with education in general, the full and true impact of the pandemic on children within the early years age group may not be known, however, for some time yet.

### Finding 23

Recognition of the emotional penalties on younger children as a result of the stay-at-home order (noting that younger children's life experience of negative impacts is significantly larger than older children and young people) is crucial to develop strategies that address these issues.

### Recommendation 9

The Minister(s) for Children for Education should ensure the ongoing monitoring of the impacts of the pandemic in relation to the early year's cohort beyond just academic outcomes. Given the potential for issues to arise further down the line in terms of a child's development, the Minister should also ensure that this monitoring is conducted regularly and is inclusive of the child's family and professionals working with them. The Minister should ensure that monitoring does not adversely impact on children and families or become a burden to professionals. Funding should be allocated to address any emerging issues, including appropriate funding to any third-sector or arms-length organisations providing services from conception to compulsory school age.

## 7.1.6 Instances of Domestic Abuse

107. In the submission from the Children's Commissioner, one impact that was highlighted was the increase in children that were subjected to domestic violence during the pandemic. She noted the following in relation to this issue:



*It is estimated that there are more than 3,500 children living in a Jersey household where domestic violence or abuse is present: this equates to 6 children in a typical class of 25. Police figures show that the number of children exposed to high-risk domestic abuse has risen by 49% when comparing January-March 2019 with January-March 2020. There has been an increase in rates of domestic abuse around the world during the Covid-19 pandemic, and we have concerns that this could be reflected in Jersey. School closures could lead to fewer referrals due to a decrease in time that professionals are spending with children and their families, thereby weakening protective measures. In our Covid-19 survey, one young person expressed that they were "worried about*



*people in abusive households with no escape". Others spoke of concern over relationships at home, including parental 'anger' or 'temper'.<sup>75 76</sup>*

108. The Commissioner also noted during a public hearing that violence against children, especially in the area of domestic abuse has risen disproportionately during the pandemic.<sup>77</sup>

109. In a submission from Barnardo's, they also highlighted concerns around the number of referrals that were made as a result of domestic abuse:

*The main challenge that children and their families experienced during the pandemic that we were made aware of was an increase in Domestic Abuse. Most of the referrals we received to support children in the Child Protection process were because of Domestic Abuse in the household.<sup>78</sup>*

110. In a submission from Senator Mézec, he explained that at the start of the pandemic, the Our "Be Our Eyes and Ears" media campaign complemented the launch of the Children and Families Hub, and drew upon the strong community spirit, which was developing during lockdown, to urge the public to play their part in ensuring children who were at risk were identified.<sup>79</sup> This also related to instances of domestic abuse.

111. The Panel notes that, at the time of writing this report, new legislation in relation to tackling domestic abuse is due to be brought forward for debate prior to the election in June 2022. It has yet to be lodged, however, and is likely to be debated at the very last sitting of the States Assembly.

112. Finally, the Panel would state that, whilst the communication campaign at the outset of the pandemic in relation to identifying vulnerable children in the community was an effective tool to identify instances of domestic abuse, it has not seen any further targeted work in order to address this. It would, therefore, suggest that further focus is put on addressing this matter.

## Finding 24

An increase in instances of domestic abuse and violence towards children was highlighted during the initial lockdown in 2020. The Government of Jersey undertook a media campaign to encourage members of the public to identify children at risk during the initial lockdown, however, the Panel has not seen further targeted work to address the increase in domestic violence.

<sup>75</sup> Submission – Children's Commissioner

<sup>76</sup> States of Jersey Police Performance Briefing January –March 2020, available at <https://jersey.police.uk/media/582534/2020-g2-annual-performance-statistics.pdf> - During factual accuracy checking the Children's Commissioner made the following point in relation to the 49% quoted during the hearing - This is correct and I quoted from a Police document. However, the Police have since acknowledged that **their data was incorrect**. I quote from a letter from the Chief of Police – 'As you rightly pointed out, the statistic you used did indeed come from a States of Jersey Police quarterly performance report. The statistic used was labelled the percentage increase in children exposed to high-risk domestic abuse from Jan-march 2019 to the same period in 2020- 49%. It has been established that this data was incorrectly labelled, and in fact referred to number of incidents and not the number of individual children. This figure therefore includes repeat families, where the same children would have been witness to incidents. We have re-run the data (accounting now for repeat children) and can confirm that the increase in children exposed to high risk domestic abuse in the months of Jan-Mar from 2019-2020 was 3 children, meaning a percentage rise of 9%, rather than 49%. SoJP now have a dedicated Analysts Department which should prevent errors like this in the future.

<sup>77</sup> Public Hearing – Children's Commissioner – 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022 – p.2

<sup>78</sup> Submission – Barnardo's

<sup>79</sup> Submission – Senator Mézec



### **Recommendation 10**

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The Minister(s) for Children and Education should, in collaboration with the Minister for Home Affairs, establish a strategy and sufficient funding for Government and third sector organisations in order to tackle the increase in domestic abuse and the impact this has had on children as a result of the pandemic. This should be completed by the end of 2022.

## 7.2 Positive actions and impacts on children and young people

### 7.2.1 Children and Families Hub

112. One area highlighted within submissions and the Panel adviser's report that was mostly spoken of in positive terms was the bringing forward of the Children and Families Hub (CFH) at the outset of the pandemic. It is noted that the original intention was for the CFH to be brought forward in September 2020, however, this was fast tracked to April 2020 in order to provide a 'front door' for people requiring support at the outset of the pandemic. This is to be commended as a really positive action taken by Government.

#### Children and Families Hub

113. As he held the position of Minister for Children and Housing at the outset of the pandemic, the Panel contacted Senator Sam Mézec to gather his views in relation to the initial response. He provided the following comments in relation to the CFH and how positive it was:

*We had always planned to establish this hub as part of the measures we were taking to focus on "Early Help" and transform the Children's Service in the hearts and minds of the public into one which children and their families felt comfortable with unilaterally approaching for help and support. But the pandemic made this development even more necessary, as many people would be feeling lost and alone during lockdown and could need somewhere to turn to. By acting quickly to bring the establishment of this service forward, we were able to make sure we had something which was much more appropriate and responsive for the situation we were facing.<sup>80</sup>*

114. The Minister for Children and Education provided the Panel with the following information in relation to the operation of the CFH in 2021:

*The Children and Families Hub was established during the height of the pandemic (with implementation being brought forward 6 months) - this created a new front door for children who need multi-agency support and has resulted in an increase in referrals 2500 (approx. in 2021).<sup>81</sup>*

115. The ongoing funding of the CFH is imperative to continue the good work that has been started as a result of this initiative and its success.

#### Finding 25

The implementation of the Children and Families Hub was brought forward from September 2020 to March 2020 in order to provide a 'front door' for support services in relation to children and young people. This has been recognised as a positive development in the early stages of the pandemic.

#### Recommendation 11

The Minister(s) for Children and Education should continue to ensure the Children and Families Hub is effectively resourced to ensure that the service provides a simplified access point for families, professionals and children and young people when in need of support.

<sup>80</sup> Submission – Senator Sam Mézec

<sup>81</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education

## 7.2.2 Getting to spend more time with family



116. One area that has been recognised as particularly positive for children and young people during the pandemic was the fact that they were able to spend more time with their family during the initial lockdown and whilst parents were working from home. Whilst negative points have been raised in relation to spending 'too much' time with family, the impact on children of domestic abuse and home schooling proving difficult, overall, the main view was positive. Examples from the focus groups included:

*"I had some time to do things I used to do. Reading books, it's a bit embarrassing but my family are into Lego. So we bought some Lego sets and were making them together. I enjoyed it again." <sup>82</sup>*

*"The family time was great, the kids said that they loved the family time. It was nice having Daddy at home." <sup>83</sup>*

117. Furthermore, the postcards raised the view from younger children that they enjoyed spending time with their families as did a number of responses in the survey.

118. In a submission from Every Child Our Future they explained the benefit of getting to spend more time with family in relation to reading:

*There are some positives expected from a situation where children and adults were struggling to adapt and cope such as resilience and closer family bonds. Many children welcomed the additional time available for their own hobbies and to read. Given that reading for pleasure is an important determinant of educational achievement, this is to be celebrated. Additionally, many children found it easier to learn remotely and were well-supported by their parents. Some relished the increased freedom and the reduction in academic pressure. <sup>84</sup>*

119. One of the other positive aspects of the pandemic has been the increased flexibility that many workplaces have adopted in relation to working from home. This not only allows flexibility for parents to spend more time with their children, but also creates a change in the work life balance for many. It is, however, important to note that this is not always possible in some workplaces. Given some of the negative impacts on children as a result of the pandemic, being able to spend more time with family is something which should be retained as much as possible. The Panel is pleased to note that the Government has consistently taken a flexible approach to its employees during the pandemic. Given the strategic commitment to put children first, and the fact that being able to spend more time with family is a positive thing for children and young people, the Panel would suggest that this approach is maintained post-pandemic as much as possible. It would also suggest that consideration of this flexible approach is brought forward in relation to the ongoing improvements in the 'family friendly' legislative approach. In developing this, the Panel would also highlight the need to avoid a culture that blends home and work together and that employers need to ensure

<sup>82</sup> 4insight report

<sup>83</sup> 4insight report

<sup>84</sup> Submission - ECOF

employees are not being contacted outside their working hours, so that they can focus on their children.

### Finding 26

Children, Young People highlighted one of the key positives of the pandemic was being able to spend more time with their family. Flexible working arrangements have also contributed to allowing parents to spend more time with their children

### Recommendation 12

The States Employment Board should commit to maintaining, post-pandemic, the flexible working arrangements adopted during the pandemic for States of Jersey employees. This will in turn assist in promoting the family friendly approach which has been adopted to date. The Panel would also highlight the need to avoid a culture that blends home and work together, and these arrangements need to ensure employees are not being contacted outside their working hours, so that they can focus on their children. Consideration should also be given to whether legislation accompanied by appropriate support should be put in place to enable workers in the private sector to have better access to family friendly working arrangements.

## 7.3 Decision making processes in relation to children and young people during the pandemic

### 7.3.1 Overview of processes

120. The three key decision-making bodies that the Panel has looked at during this review are the Emergencies Council, Competent Authority Ministers and Council of Ministers. It has also noted the input of STAC in relation to these bodies.

121. The Emergencies Council met at the outset of the pandemic, especially with the unknown effects at the time of the virus on all age groups. As the pandemic progressed, however, meetings of the Emergencies Council reduced in number. The Emergencies Council is comprised of the following members at present:

- Chief Minister (Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré)
- Minister for Home Affairs (Deputy Gregory Guida)
- Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (Senator L.J. Farnham)
- Minister for Infrastructure (Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour)
- Minister for Health and Social Services (Deputy R.J. Renouf of St. Ouen)
- Minister for External Relations and Financial Services (Senator I.J. Gorst)
- Connétable D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence (representing the Comité des Connétables)
- The Bailiff, Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General are also entitled to attend meetings of the Emergencies Council and be heard during them.<sup>85</sup>



<sup>85</sup> Constitution of the States of Jersey

122. The CAM membership is comprised of the following members:

- Chief Minister (Senator J.A.N. Le Fondré)
- Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture (Senator L.J. Farnham)
- Minister for Home Affairs (Deputy Gregory Guida)
- Minister for Infrastructure (Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour)
- Minister for Health and Social Services (Deputy R.J. Renouf of St. Ouen)
- Minister For External Relations (Senator I.J. Gorst)
- Other Ministers are invited to attend as required.<sup>86</sup>

123. The Panel notes that the Minister for Children and Education is not included in the membership of the Emergencies Council. This is also the case in relation to the Competent Authorities Ministers. The Panel questioned the Chief Minister during a public hearing as to whether the Minister for Children and Education should be included automatically on these bodies:

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

*Do you think that is something that should be changed in terms of the legislation and the policies? Do you think that the Minister for Children and the Minister for Education should be automatically members of those decision-making bodies?*

**The Chief Minister:**

*... it did have the director generals of both C.Y.P.E.S. and Education present, who obviously then did, at operational level, speak for children as well. The difficulty is, and this is one of the problems I think trying to look ahead and predict what a future emergency looks like, because an emergency, particularly under the Emergencies Council, could range from a cataclysmic, some form of disaster - an explosion at the fuel farm, for the sake of argument, something huge - versus at the extreme end of what we have had, which has been a global crisis but one that has now lasted near enough 2 years or, depending which point of reference you use, longer than 2 years. The short answer is it depends for the particular thing that you are having to deal with as to who should be present and on the circumstances.<sup>87</sup>*

124. The Panel understands the rationale in relation to the nature of the emergency as to whether a particular Minister is required or not. It is noted also that the Minister for Children and Education has since attended CAM meetings. In a public hearing with the Children's Commissioner, she explained the following view in relation to the constitution of these bodies when questioned about whether or not the Minister for Children and Education should be automatically involved:

**Children's Commissioner:**

*I think that has been an issue and moving forward I would like to see in any future structure as the pandemic continues that somebody is there representing the breadth of children's rights. Because it is not as simple as it is just about their mental health and their education. It is much, much broader.<sup>88</sup>*

125. Whilst the Panel does acknowledge the need for attendance based on the situation, given the Government of Jersey's commitment to put children first, and the point raised

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<sup>86</sup> Constitution of the States of Jersey

<sup>87</sup> Public Hearing – Chief Minister – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022

<sup>88</sup> Public Hearing – Children's Commissioner – 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022

by the Children's Commissioner in relation to supporting the rights of children more broadly, it would suggest that the Minister for Children and Education should automatically be a member of these bodies so that Children's Rights are represented at all levels of the decision-making process.

### Finding 27

The Minister for Children and Education is not an automatic member of the Emergencies Council or the Competent Authorities Ministers. Whilst it is acknowledged that the Minister can be invited to attend meetings, the Panel is of the opinion that the Minister should be automatically included in the members of the two decision making bodies.

### Recommendation 13

The Chief Minister should make the necessary legislative changes in order to include the Minister for Children and Education as an automatic member of the Emergencies Council. The Minister should also be made an automatic member of the Competent Authorities Ministers.

### 7.3.2 Children's Rights Impact Assessments

126. Throughout the pandemic, a number of Children's Rights Impact Assessments (CRIA) have been undertaken at key points in the response. The Panel was provided with an overview of the CRIA's undertaken by the Minister for Children and Education.



127. A CRIA was first completed in relation to the reopening of schools in June 2020 and then to keep schools open to the end of the Autumn Term 2020.<sup>89</sup> A further CRIA was completed by the Children's Commissioner in September 2021 in relation to the vaccine roll-out for children.<sup>90</sup> The Minister provided the following information in relation to how the CRIA was informed:

*The CRIA was informed by the findings of the Jersey Children and Young People Survey, of which 2,105 children and young people responded to provide their views on a range of issues including:*

- *Returning to school*
- *Wellbeing and homelife*
- *Learning from home*

*The CRIA gave invaluable information on the positive and negative impacts resulting from the decision to return to school. Importantly, the CRIA provided consideration for key decisions so to assess the impact of these decisions on children and young people.<sup>91</sup>*

128. The Panel notes that, at present, the requirement to undertake a CRIA is not statutory in Jersey as, whilst Jersey agreed to extend the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 2014, it has yet to enact legislation which places a

<sup>89</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education

<sup>90</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education

<sup>91</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education



statutory duty to give due regard to children's rights. Given that this is the case, the Panel is pleased to see that CRIA's have been completed in any event.

129. Thankfully, at the time of writing this report, legislation to create a due regard model in relation to children's rights on the States Assembly and Government was lodged by the Minister for Children and Education and debated and adopted on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2022. The Panel is pleased to see that this legislation has now been adopted by the States Assembly. It will, however, only come into force through Appointed Day Act in the next States Assembly.

### Finding 28

A number of Children's Rights Impact Assessments were undertaken at key stages during the pandemic, even though no statutory duty was in place to ensure they were completed. The Panel notes that legislation to ensure a due regard model is due to be debated at the end of March 2022.

### Recommendation 14

The Panel is pleased to see that Children's Rights Impact Assessments have been completed during the response to the pandemic, especially in light of the lack of a statutory requirement to do so. The Council of Ministers should continue to undertake CRIA's at all key points in the response to the Pandemic as a matter of priority.

### 7.3.3 Putting Children First and Involving Children and Young People

130. As part of the decision-making process, the Panel wanted to understand how Government had involved children in the decision-making process and, furthermore, utilised this in relation to the putting children first pledge.



131. The Minister for Children and Education provided the Panel with an overview of some of the key actions that were taken by Government in order to involve children and young people in the decision-making process and in turn feed into the CRIA process as follows:

- The Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills commissioned a joint survey with the Children's Commissioner during the school closures. A total of 2,105 children and young people shared their thoughts and feelings on a range of topics, from the impact coronavirus has had on their friendships to their experiences of home learning and returning to school. This survey helped to inform policy in the reopening of schools and data from the survey helped to inform the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for children and young people.
- Collaboration with the Children's Commissioner continued throughout the pandemic on policy changes that would impact children and young people.
- Views were sought from parents and students who took part in the summer school catch up programme, which more than 80 students attended. Evidence

shows this was a huge success with positive feedback, which will inform the next sessions.

- There was engagement with young people in schools, youth service and 4insight focus groups to assess the impact of pandemic and seek their views on campaigns such as Lateral Flow Testing and Vaccination in schools' programme.
- Best Start Partnership lockdown survey '42 days and counting' sought family and child views of the impacts to help us now deliver through our COVID recover funded programme.
- The Childcare survey gathered views from workforce and children in registered settings to plan our regulation and review work appropriately to minimise any negative impact but to ensure safety and compliance was maintained.<sup>92</sup>

132. Further examples of how children and young people were given a voice were provided as follows:

- *[The Jersey Children and Young People's survey](#) was released on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022. All pupils in Year 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12, including home-schooled pupils, were given the opportunity to take part in the survey during school time in the Autumn Term. The survey is voluntary to complete and is anonymous. The results from the survey will allow for a better understanding of life from children's perspectives. Their views will help decision-making for the services provided to them.*
- *We ensure that children and young people continue to have a voice throughout the pandemic through school councils, Youth Parliament, YES Project, Children and Families Hub, Kooth Jersey, Youth Service, media, Tik Tok and other social media channels.*
- *A recent example was an event at Haute Vallée school on vaccines for 12–17-year-olds. The Children and Education Minister attended with CYPES and Public Health to an 'Ask the Experts' to answer questions from young people. The outcome was that the school had the highest numbers of vaccine uptake compared to other schools. This evidence has helped to inform the next rollout of the programme.<sup>93</sup>*

133. Senator Mézec provided the following view in relation to whether the Government had put children first during the pandemic:

*But even though there are things which people could point to as examples of children not being put first in the pandemic response, or areas where the general development of the "Putting Children First" philosophy seemed to go backwards, I am still of the view that the vast majority of those in public service who stepped up to the mark during that stage of the pandemic were absolutely committed to putting children first.<sup>94</sup>*

134. Whilst numerous points were raised in relation to what had been done, the Panel's Advisers took a different tone in relation to their evaluation as to whether the Government had put children first during the pandemic:

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<sup>92</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education

<sup>93</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education

<sup>94</sup> Submission – Senator Mézec

*While such a view must also be set against the competing perspective that the tide is slowly changing in this regard, the evidence presented through this review add the appendage that such efforts have not been rapid enough to keep pace with the urgent and pressing challenges that have been brought about through the crisis of a global health pandemic. Of all the voices in this debate it is those of children and young people that should be listened to, and on this matter their position was clear that Government was not listening to their concerns, and when addressing the Government directly included the following comments on the Jersey response to COVID-19;*

*“Be more consistent, and communicate better and explain the reasoning behind decisions”  
(4Insight young person on unidentified age)*

*“[Stop] blaming young people for what they failed to prevent”  
(4Insight young person on unidentified age)<sup>95</sup>*

135. Furthermore, the Children’s Commissioner gave the following view in relation to whether Government had put children first during the pandemic:

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

*Yes, thank you. Given the actions taken to date, do you believe that the Government of Jersey has put children first throughout the pandemic?*

**Children’s Commissioner for Jersey:**

*As I have stated in my report, I do not believe that they have, but this is not unique. As my report explains, I am part of a European network of ombudspersons and children’s commissioners. It is a network of 42 countries across the world now - it is beyond European borders - and our work during the pandemic involved international research into how different countries have performed. I think it is clear to see that a number of countries have failed to protect and promote children’s rights during the pandemic, although some countries have done it very, very well. It is interesting in the research to read what it is that other countries did that was different. But what I saw here in Jersey is many times the excuse for either rushing through a proposition or a piece of emergency legislation was because we need to act quickly, but some of those propositions and some of the bits of legislation had not been properly debated.<sup>96</sup>*

136. The Commissioner went on to explain an example in relation to a proposition being put forward to make a substantial change to fostering arrangements and the impact of rushing through legislation in relation to the pandemic:

*I refer to it in my report; you can read what I said. I made it clear that I totally did not support that because it may put children at risk of harm. As a result, that proposition was withdrawn. If we had missed that because they had not asked us for feedback on it, then that may well have gone through.<sup>97</sup>*

137. The Panel questioned the assertion that the Government had not put children first during the pandemic in a public hearing with the Chief Minister and received the following response:

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<sup>95</sup> Advisers’ Report

<sup>96</sup> Public Hearing – Children’s Commissioner – 17 January 2022 p.8

<sup>97</sup> Public Hearing – Children’s Commissioner – 17 January 2022 p.9

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

*I think this is a key thing because we have received evidence and people have that perception, do you feel then that the notion that the Government has failed to put children first is wrong or do you deny that? What would you say to those people therefore who have voiced that concern? What would your succinct reply be to that, if I may put it that way?*

**The Chief Minister:**

*We have tried to work as closely as we can to ensure the best overall outcomes for all Islanders. Then in particular with children, we have made sure that the right voices have been heard, I think, at the right times, at the right decision-making level. But, as I said, in terms of the operational side there has been direct contact and regular contact, as I have understood matters, with the Children's Commissioner from very early days on this.<sup>98</sup>*

138. Furthermore, the Minister for Children and Education (who was also in attendance during the public hearing) provided the following view in relation to whether Government had put children first during the pandemic:

**Minister for Children and Education**

*I would say that we have met constantly with the unions to make sure that they are happy with what is going on in schools. C.Y.P.E.S. officials meet almost daily with heads and in communication about schools and children and what are the best outcomes there. We meet with home learners, and I have had lots of meetings with them, with nurseries, with Highlands. C.Y.P.E.S., and as a Government, we have been constantly in communication with all of the charities and organisations that deal with children to make sure that we know what is happening on the ground and can make informed decisions.<sup>99</sup>*

139. A further point raised by the Chief Minister was that difficulties arise when a general assertion is made and that it is best to understand the detail behind that assertion first in order to challenge the evidence. The Panel would suggest that the Chief Minister should speak directly to the Children's Commissioner in order to better understand the reasoning for this view.

**Finding 29**

The Children's Commissioner and Panel Adviser's concluded that Government did not always put children first in response to the pandemic. It is the view of the Chief Minister and Minister for Children and Education that Government has continued to meet with all groups in order to better inform its decision making.

**Recommendation 15**

There appears to be a disconnect between Government and key stakeholder views as to whether the Government of Jersey has put children first throughout the pandemic. The Chief Minister has also stated that in order to understand the general assertion that the Government has not put children first, it is best to understand the detail behind it. The Panel would recommend that the Chief Minister, as soon as practicable, engages in dialogue with the Children's Commissioner to understand the view further. The Chief Minister should also wherever possible, and from the earliest stages, directly engage with children to seek their views on what they want and need, when forming policy or legislation which will affect them.

<sup>98</sup> Public Hearing – Chief Minister – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022 – p.13

<sup>99</sup> Public Hearing – Chief Minister – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022 – p.13

## 7.4 Corporate Parenting during the pandemic

140. The Panel noted from the Adviser's report that they had concluded from the evidence received that the Government of Jersey was not always cognisant of its role as a corporate parent.<sup>100</sup> It was furthermore noted that this omission could be ideological or rest with the organisational culture of Government.<sup>101</sup> The following point was raised in respect of this issue:



*It was evident, for example, from the fact that the Education officials had to make a 'case' for expenditure on vital resources (why was a case needed in the first place, wasn't there obvious need here?) which in the end took 6 months before funding was provided. Their omission was also clear from evidence of poor access to healthcare and therapeutic services (a key mandate of UNCRC), with an unacceptable waiting list for these services now having built up since the pandemic began. The lifting of the ban on evictions left open the possibility that children could face uprooting and significant stress at the worst possible time.<sup>102</sup>*

141. The advisers also noted that the lack of adequate outdoor play areas and unaffordability of outdoor activities assumes that all children have either the funds or their own private outdoor areas at home - which is clearly not the case, with the poorest in over-crowded homes that have no garden suffering from this assumption. These were highlighted by the advisers as just some examples they had found of where the Government had fallen short of its responsibility to care for the needs and development of children and young people in Jersey.<sup>103</sup>
142. The Panel sought to understand the views of the Chief Minister and Minister for Children and Education in relation to what they felt constituted a successful corporate parent, and were provided with the following information during public hearings:

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

*In terms of corporate parenting and what it looks like, Chief Minister, what does a good or successful corporate parent look like to you in terms of the daily, weekly or monthly actions that you as a corporate parent might take?*

**The Chief Minister:**

*The whole point of the corporate parenting side, and Scott can add a lot more on to this, is about treating children that are under our care as if we were a parent. That means anything from making sure we look after them properly in the same way as a parent even up to the level of university and all those types of things, and indeed from memory I read a compelling social media post from one of the people in our charge from that perspective who was very complimentary, certainly at that point, on everything that they had received, and how they had been looked after.<sup>104</sup>*

<sup>100</sup> Adviser's report

<sup>101</sup> Adviser's report

<sup>102</sup> Adviser's report

<sup>103</sup> Adviser's report

<sup>104</sup> Public Hearing – Chief Minister – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022



**The Minister for Children and Education:**

*Corporate parenting, especially, as you say, with children that are in the care of the Minister and of Government, the fundamentals of it is that they are our children and we are their parents and we have to act and behave in a way that any parent would with their own child, be it care of having a safe environment, care of making sure that they are listened to, that they have the same opportunities as they would if they were in care of their own parents. That is the role of the corporate parenting, so we have to have a holistic view across all of the Government on what we can do which would give the same opportunities and care of the children in our care that somebody would have if it was their own children; that is my view of it.*<sup>105</sup>

143. The Panel notes that the views of the Chief Minister and Minister for Children and Education broadly align. The Panel also questioned the Children's Commissioner on what she felt a successful corporate parent would look like and how that would be understood by a child who was living in the care of the Minister:

**Children's Commissioner for Jersey:**

*... if I were a child growing up in care, I would never hear the term corporate parent, I would just know that the care that I received was loving and caring and kept me safe from harm and was the very best that all my friends were receiving, whether they live with their parents or not.*<sup>106</sup>

144. The Senior Practitioner from the Office of the Children's Commissioner also explained the following points in relation to the views of children and young people in care and how they should, ultimately, not see any difference in care than they would if with their parents:

**Senior Practitioner, Office of the Children's Commissioner for Jersey:**

*Corporate parenting as a theme is complex and it has lots of aspects to it but for the child they should not see any different. What we are seeing is children growing up in care. We spoke to them at length this last year in preparation for a piece of work we were doing with the United Nations, the general discussion. They told us things like: "Why can we not go on holiday like normal kids? Why can we not have friends round and in our bedrooms like normal families?" Because when they are growing up in care they are not allowed to do that: "Why can we not have sleepovers?" They see their lives as being distinct and they are identified as being in care.*<sup>107</sup>

145. The Panel notes that a Corporate Parenting Board was established in 2019 off the back of recommendations arising from the Independent Care Inquiry. It is noted that the aim of the board is as follows:

*The Corporate Parenting Board (CPB) will provide political oversight on how the Government of Jersey is discharging its Corporate Parenting duties to Looked After Children and Care Leavers. The Board will embody the 'Putting Children First' Pledge and more intuitively, it will ask the question "would this be good enough for my child?" in relation to aspiration, outcomes, policies and services.*<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Quarterly Hearing – Minister for Children and Education – 4<sup>th</sup> February 2022

<sup>106</sup> Public Hearing – Children's Commissioner – 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022

<sup>107</sup> Public Hearing – Children's Commissioner – 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022

<sup>108</sup> <https://www.gov.je/caring/children/socialcareservice/childrensservicesimprovementplan/pages/corporateparentingboard.aspx>



146. Concern was raised, however, that the Board did not meet between September 2020 and September 2021<sup>109</sup>. It should be noted that, during that time, the Ministerial portfolios in relation to children went through a degree of uncertainty. Senator Mézec resigned as Minister for Children and Housing ahead of a vote of no confidence in the Chief Minister and was replaced by Deputy Jeremy Maçon. Ultimately the remit of Minister for Children and Housing was incorporated into the new portfolio of Minister for Children and Education in early 2021. Further disruption occurred when Deputy Maçon was suspended from the role and ultimately resigned. During this time the Chief Minister delegated responsibility to the Assistant Ministers for Children and Education. It was not until June 2021 that a new permanent Minister was appointed (Deputy Scott Wickenden), who has remained in the role since.
147. Noting this uncertainty, the Panel questioned the Chief Minister as to whether in a future emergency he would ensure that the corporate parenting board continued to meet:

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

*In any future pandemics or emergency situations would you ensure that the Corporate Parenting Board continued to meet?*

**The Chief Minister:**

*Yes. I was not aware that they had not met during the pandemic, if that is what you are suggesting. I think the other point is that again with the corporate parenting packages even today I think there are some further announcements coming out about the experiences and what that means, so it is something that is ongoing. Again, it is something that is continuing to be put through the organisation at an operational and senior management level.<sup>110</sup>*

148. The Panel is concerned that the Corporate Parenting Board did not meet during the critical phase of the pandemic given its focus on ensuring the best support for especially vulnerable children and young people. It does, however, note the disruption within the Ministerial portfolio that may have been a contributing factor to this. This cannot be discounted when examining whether the Government of Jersey has ultimately fulfilled its duty as a corporate parent.

### Finding 30

There is a shared view across the evidence received as to what is meant by a successful corporate parent. The Government of Jersey has acknowledged this, however, concern has been raised that this may not have been at the forefront of decision making during the pandemic.

### Finding 31

The Corporate Parenting Board did not meet between September 2020 and September 2021. It is the view of the Panel that this is not acceptable given its importance during a particularly trying time. However, the disruption within the Ministerial portfolio for children between November 2020 and June 2021 cannot be discounted as a reason for the board not meeting.

<sup>109</sup> <https://www.gov.je/caring/children/socialcareservice/childrenservicesimprovementplan/pages/corporateparentingboard.aspx>

<sup>110</sup> Public Hearing – Chief Minister – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022

## Recommendation 16

The Minister(s) for Children and Education should ensure that the Corporate Parenting Board continues to meet on a regular basis given its importance in respect of some of the most vulnerable children and young people in Jersey. The Minister should also ensure that a timetable of proposed meeting dates for the board is published on the Government of Jersey website as a matter of urgency in order to increase transparency.

### 7.5 Communication with children and young people

149. The Panel received an overview from the Minister for Children and Education in relation to the various communication methods that were used during the pandemic to speak directly to children and young people about various developments. The following key points were raised:



- Government messages around the pandemic were directly tailored to various audiences, including children, young people, parents and carers.
  - At the start of the pandemic, posters, leaflets, videos and social media messages were designed for schools, nurseries and colleges in age-appropriate formats.
  - We engaged with young people through schools, colleges, Jersey Youth Service and 4Insight focus groups to develop messaging in a child/youth friendly format.
  - We worked with the Jersey Youth Service to encourage young people to create content on relevant social platforms (TikTok and Instagram) with key messages and to share it.
  - Video content was created for school assemblies, youth services and screens in school reception areas developed based on feedback from school students.
  - We launched an Ask the Expert app where students could ask a question direct to Vaccine experts.
  - Content for children is being developed with the Children’s Commissioner Office using a Youth Friendly agency<sup>111</sup>
150. Furthermore, the Chief Minister provided the Panel with the following initiatives that were taken forward to communicate with children and young people:
- Young people were filmed sharing advice and experiences as part of our safe back to school campaign.
  - Subtitles were added to all videos, with age specific content developed for children and young people; all key messages were translated into British Sign Language and key announcements have been translated into Portuguese, Polish and Romanian.
  - We identified key influencers to join discussions and be interviewed live on Radio Youth FM with Ministers and the Children’s Commissioner engaging with children and young people to ensure an ongoing, open, two-way exchange of views about what we do to help. The radio shows were presented by young people who are both volunteers at Youth Arts Jersey.

<sup>111</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education

- Consistent letters were sent to all children and young people and parents from Dr Muscat through all schools – directly addressing parents and children and young people with guidance and key messages
- A new Learning at Home website was created on Gov.je with age-appropriate content for every year group.<sup>112</sup>

151. The Panel did, however, receive significant feedback from the focus groups in relation to their experience of the communication by Government, especially in relation to children and young people:

*"In our house all the children attend different schools, all got different messages...there needs to be one body and everybody doing the same thing."*<sup>113</sup>

*"[Press conference information] would be leaked before every time. It was really unprofessional, it happened on three different occasions."*<sup>114</sup>

*"If you're going to have a decision you know people will hate, explain the rational. Otherwise you just think it's unfair, explain the reasoning."*<sup>115</sup>

*"It was frustrating when you'd go for walks on the beach and you'd see big groups of parents with toddlers. There's nothing to tell them off for gathering but had that been a group of teenagers there'd be an uproar. There were double standards. Young people were scapegoated."*<sup>116</sup>

*"In my opinion, they didn't do amazing. We got the blame for a lot of stuff. No support for gyms or pubs whereas stuff for older people would have support."*<sup>117</sup>

152. The Children's Commissioner raised the following point when asked during a public hearing for her analysis of the communication strategy with children and young people during the pandemic:

**Children's Commissioner for Jersey:**

*I think what we will say is that there was insufficient targeted messaging for children and young people. For example, more recently I took part in a Facebook live event with Dr. Ivan Muscat, the Director General, and others and it was a really successful event. The young people were properly supported by their schools to take part and young people reported that it was a good mechanism, but it has happened once in 2 years. As you know, I have a statutory Youth Advisory Panel. They wrote to the Chief Minister right at the beginning of the pandemic asking to meet with him and others to talk about their concerns; that was never granted."*<sup>118</sup>

153. One area where a positive point was raised in relation to communication was in respect of Early Years. The Jersey Child Care Trust explained that a flexible approach was taken by Government for children with additional needs and this was done together with good communication.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Response – Chief Minister

<sup>113</sup> 4insight report

<sup>114</sup> 4insight report

<sup>115</sup> 4insight report

<sup>116</sup> 4insight report

<sup>117</sup> 4insight report

<sup>118</sup> Public Hearing – Children's Commissioner – 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022

<sup>119</sup> Submission – Jersey Child Care Trust

154. The theme of young people being scapegoated was one that was raised throughout the focus groups. This point was also put forward by the Panel Advisers in their report:

*Young people were scapegoated and blamed for spikes in cases, through little to no fault of their own. They appear to have been harshly treated by the authorities for any divergence from the rules. Whilst people of all ages should follow the rules, there also needs to be recognition that socialising with their peers is vital for the social and emotional development of children and young people. Not providing this opportunity is just as much of a threat to their development - and greater acknowledgement was needed of this.<sup>120</sup>*

155. The Panel notes that the view in relation to this point, initially stemmed from a press conference that was held on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2020, where the Chief Minister stated the following:

*Young people are having significant impact on the growing spread of COVID-19 within our community. We know through our interviews during the contact tracing process that physical contact between friends, between boyfriends and girlfriends, and the sharing of drinks and vapes, is leading to the spread of the virus among younger and asymptomatic carriers. We are now seeing cases that we can trace back to Halloween parties and this is particularly troubling, given the number of warnings we issued about keeping safe during that holiday. I want to address all young people in Jersey directly and say simply and starkly: You can catch COVID-19 and if you do, you will spread it to your friends and family. You may not have symptoms, but you could infect someone that will. While your lives may not be at high risk from COVID-19, that of your family, and especially your older relatives is. Please think how devastating it would be for you, and your family, if you were to infect your grandmother or grandfather and, worse still, lead to their deaths.<sup>121</sup>*

156. The Panel followed this point up with the Chief Minister during a public hearing to try and better understand the rationale for the statement:

***The Chief Minister:***

*I have to say although I think there was evidence, as I recall at the time, that was coming through contact tracing, that a number of the spreads were coming through outside of the educational sphere but were occurring within young people, essentially it was trying to reinforce the importance of acting appropriately.<sup>122</sup>*

157. The Minister for Children and Education provided the Panel with a list of actions that are already underway in order to better involve children and young people in the communication of key messages relating to the pandemic:

- CYPES and Public Health work closely on communication strategies for children and young people.
- A Digital content officer has been appointed to engage with children and young people through Tik Tok.
- A digital youth report is published weekly - views on TikTok during the last week of January 2022 was 31,200 video views.

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<sup>120</sup> Adviser's Report

<sup>121</sup> <https://www.gov.je/News/2020/Pages/ChiefMinisterStatement6Nov.aspx>

<sup>122</sup> Public Hearing – Chief Minister – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022

- Roadshows have been carried out and more will continue this month for Ministers and senior officers to visit schools, youth clubs, colleges to speak with children and young people and hear from them directly.
- Listening and involving children and young people is a key objective of the strategy.
- Collaborating with Children's Commissioner's Office to ensure the office is informed, has input and content is child friendly.
- Engaging Islanders to assist in creating content suitable for younger audience - we have used students and more recently local islanders who have contacted us to assist with this and are producing their own videos for us to share.<sup>123</sup>

### Finding 32

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The focus groups and the Panel Advisers found that a statement by the Chief Minister in November 2020 had been taken in a negative way, with some responses in the focus groups feeling that the statement had scapegoated young people for a spike in cases during that period.

### Finding 33

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It is the view of the Children's Commissioner that there was insufficient targeted messaging to children and young people during the pandemic. Successful examples were highlighted in relation to Facebook live events which children and young people engaged with, however, these only took place twice during the pandemic and as Facebook is only accessible to children aged 13 and over, this excluded any children below that age.

### Finding 34

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There are a number of actions that have been taken by the Minister for Children and Education in order to better involve children and young people in communication initiatives moving forward from the pandemic.

### Recommendation 17

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Noting the progress made by Government in the utilising Facebook Live initiatives during the pandemic, the Minister(s) for Children and Education should ensure that more of these events are carried out in general to engage children and young people in communicating important information. The Minister should also continue to develop further targeted communication initiatives to engage with children and young people who are not old enough to access social media.

### Recommendation 18

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The Minister(s) for Children and Education should publish a communications strategy which outlines how the Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills intends to include and involve children and young people in developing messages in relation to the pandemic and more broadly on matters directly affecting them. This should be completed by September 2022 and published on the Government of Jersey website.

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<sup>123</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education



## 7.6 Lessons learned and strategy for children and young people post-pandemic

158. One key area to understand is what some of the lessons learned from the pandemic have been by Government. It should be acknowledged that at no point would the Panel expect for everything to have been done 100% correct at all times. This would be an unrealistic expectation given the uncertainty that arose during the pandemic.



159. The Minister for Children and Education provided the Panel with an overview of some of the key challenges that were faced and some of the key outcomes that had been highlighted in respect of the response to assist children and young people:

- *The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on education and care services has been very significant to date, from the early years services we regulate and support, through schools and colleges, up to Further and Higher Education*
- *As strongly as we have responded to emerging and known need, we still do not know the longer-term impacts of the pandemic on children and young people, especially in the area of mental health. Some of these issues will also apply to the workforce.*
- *We learnt that our children, young people and staff are incredibly resilient, coping very well with the wide range of challenges presented by the pandemic.*
- *School staff and those across services for children, were, and continue to be, outstanding in their flexibility and responsiveness: this front line stood up. Centrally, we established the CYPES Hub (distinct from the excellent Children and Families Hub) which met daily to ensure the children of critical workers had their needs met, and in moving staff between schools and services to fill gaps. For example, as the Youth clubs provision temporarily closed, Youth workers gave months of dedicated service to our Special Schools.*
- *A key impact was the rapid improvement in multi-agency working. Inclusion Teams liaised with Social Care colleagues and the Hubs to closely monitor attendance, especially of the most vulnerable, and respond to need across welfare, well-being, mental health etc.<sup>124</sup>*

160. Furthermore, when looking forward, the Minister explained that the following key points were being considered and would need to be kept in mind as the response to pandemic continued:

- *It will be important to have at the forefront that children and young people have very different needs from adults and need their needs considered accordingly. The pandemic was a time of great social control which many of our citizens found very difficult to cope with and understand, for children, that would have been more difficult or confusing. Balancing the range of needs i.e., stopping infection in the community and the important need for children to have social contact, keep learning and for those most vulnerable to be seen by safe adults out with the family home was a challenge.*
- *We will keep children at the forefront of our thinking in the recovery period hence the resources being set aside. It is apparent that there will for some children and young people be long lasting effects across the spectrum of need impacting on levels of need and demand for services. This includes emotional wellbeing and*

<sup>124</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education



mental health issues, school support, relationship difficulties at home and the community, family breakdown, more families looking for support to manage issues within the home.

- We are going to refresh the agreed practice framework (Jersey's Children First) used across all agencies supporting children to ensure that all staff use a single straightforward approach including the use of a lead worker who co-ordinates support, one child's assessment and plan and taking a team around the child approach. This recovery period is the ideal time to re-fresh and reinvigorate the approach and set the stall for how we work with children and families.
- The govt plan sets out investment to establish the new Young People's Intensive Support Service to support the most vulnerable, challenging and at risk children in the island – in the wake of Covid this service is likely to be even more important for this group who were likely to have been significantly impacted.<sup>125</sup>

### Finding 35

There is an welcome acknowledgment from the Minister for Children and Education that the needs of children and young people going forward will need to be kept at the forefront in light of the fact that some key issues may not be fully understood at this time.

### Finding 36

The Minister for Children and Education has committed extra resources to assist in the recovery process for children and young people, especially in relation to the most vulnerable children and young people in society.

161. When asked to characterise the Government of Jersey's response to the pandemic and how this has worked in practice, and the key areas that had been focussed on by the Government from the outset, the Chief Minister gave the following response during a public hearing:

***The Chief Minister:***

*As I said earlier, what we have been doing when we have been going through the pandemic is this balance of risks, balance of harms, and that is about dealing with lives and livelihoods and, from a child's perspective, that is how it impacts on them. It could be, depending on the age of the child, how it has impacted them in their schooling, how it has impacted on who looks after them but, equally, it can be how it has impacted on their families, their parents and their grandparents. In the context of when we first started, the very real concern was about the loss of life to any of those and obviously, as the data improved, to those parts of society. In terms of one thing we teach I think in all the schools is resilience, and all I will say is as a community this has been the biggest test of resilience that we have ever had to face since the Second World War in a civil context.<sup>126</sup>*

162. The Panel went on to question the Chief Minister in relation to what he would do differently if another similar pandemic occurred and was provided with the following response: The Chief Minister explained that ultimately the Government has tried to look after children as well as all sections of society during the pandemic and whilst it has been a difficult time for many there will have been things that could have been

<sup>125</sup> Submission – Minister for Children and Education

<sup>126</sup> Public Hearing – Chief Minister – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022

done better but the Government had tried at all times to do the absolute best.<sup>127</sup> Furthermore, he explained that gathering improved data would be important as well.<sup>128</sup>

163. The Panel sought to clarify whether this could be construed as saying there was nothing that would be done differently when responding to a future pandemic:

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

*So just to clarify what you have said, there is nothing that you would do differently?*

**The Chief Minister:**

*I did not say that. I said that at this stage there will be things I am sure that could be improved but given the situation we faced at the time, the timescales that we had to react and the resources and information we had available, I think we did the very best we could.<sup>129</sup>*

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

*Let us say it is another virus, a very similar pandemic. What would you do differently?*

**The Chief Minister:**

*I do not think right at this stage I could specifically say: "We would do X versus Y differently" because it will very much depend on the circumstances and what the data is coming in for. What I would hope is that we would be in a better position from the point of view of having better certainty of data, which then allows you to make even better decisions, for example.<sup>130</sup>*

### Finding 37

When questioned on how the Chief Minister would respond to any future pandemics differently it was explained that it would depend on the nature of the circumstances and what data is required to analyse this. It is also noted that the Chief Minister is of the view that the Island would be in a better position from the point of view of having better certainty of data from which to act accordingly.

164. A key point that was raised in the Panel Advisers' report was the need for a post-COVID-19 strategy in relation to children and young people. The following point was raised in relation to the global recognition of the impact of COVID-19 on an entire generation of children and young people:

*Governments around the world have recognised the impact of COVID-19 on an entire generation of children and young people - alert to the specific COVID-related impacts on child development, achievement gaps, mental health, wellbeing, transitional and labour market entry inequalities, to name but a few. There is now long-term planning underway on how to address this disruption with the development of education recovery plans. In England, the Government have begun to plan an education recovery programme, with a series of announcements around specific long-term initiatives including a 'Recovery*

<sup>127</sup> Public Hearing – Chief Minister – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022

<sup>128</sup> Public Hearing – Chief Minister – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022

<sup>129</sup> Public Hearing – Chief Minister – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022

<sup>130</sup> Public Hearing – Chief Minister – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022

*Premium' for schools (building on the Pupil Premium) to provide, summer schools, mental health training for staff, and a tutoring programme. They are currently working on further recovery plans for the long term, having appointed a Recovery Commissioner, Sir Kevan Collins.<sup>131</sup>*

165. Indeed, the Advisers went on to make the following recommendation as a result of their review of the Government's response and plans moving forward:

***Develop a comprehensive post-COVID-19 recovery strategy for children and young people*** - which encompasses all key domains of their lives (e.g. education, social and emotional wellbeing, physical and mental health, economic security)<sup>132</sup>

166. The Panel was keen to understand other stakeholders' views of this point and questioned the Children's Commissioner during a public hearing as to whether she felt a post-COVID-19 strategy specifically targeted at children and young people was required. It was noted that the

***Children's Commissioner for Jersey:***

*The Government at the moment have a strategy for children and it is set out in the Children's Plan. But what we saw during the last 2 years is there are very little changes to that plan in terms of we have had this plan, these were our priorities but they have changed because of the pandemic. One of the other issues is that the group leading that plan - in fact it meets this afternoon - is the Children's Strategic Partnership Board. They themselves have not met regularly during the pandemic and they are the ones whose responsibility the plan is to deliver.<sup>133</sup>*

167. In the submission from Senator Mézec, he raised the point in relation to the pre-pandemic issues that had been faced in Jersey and how these needed to be addressed in any post-COVID-19 strategy:

*A comprehensive post-Covid-19 strategy must focus not just on undoing the damage caused by Covid but also on resolving many of the ills we faced in our society before the pandemic too. Our trend of growing inequality is unsustainable and must be reversed. This should not be done at the expense of other more specific recovery strategies (such as focusing on educational catch up), but to complement them so children can be provided with an environment which enables them to thrive, no matter what their socio-economic background is.<sup>134</sup>*

168. The views from the focus groups in relation to what could have been done differently and what to focus on were varied. When asked the question "our government's response to the pandemic, considering children, young people and their families would be so much better it...?" the following key points were raised:

- Many respondents felt the Government's communications could have been improved. They felt they lacked clarity and put too much blame on young islanders. Respondents also wanted to know the reasoning behind the decision making and any medical evidence used

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<sup>131</sup> Adviser's report

<sup>132</sup> Advisers report

<sup>133</sup> Public Hearing – Children's Commissioner – 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022

<sup>134</sup> Submission – Senator Mézec

- Respondents also mentioned the need to prioritise children’s mental health in the wake of the pandemic as they didn’t feel it was prioritised during the earlier stages of the pandemic at all
- Some felt they should have considered the impact on islanders’ mental and physical health before prioritising the economic impact of the pandemic and lockdowns. Some felt a public consultation could have helped to achieve this
- Other suggestions included: speaking to children and gaining their thoughts, being more lenient with regard to bubbles in schools and increasing consistency of rules at school with rules outside of schools e.g. allowed to sit next to someone for hours but not allowed in their garden.<sup>135</sup>

169. Examples of responses to this question included:

*“If there was a uniform message and strategy, more lenient towards creating ‘bubbles’ of contact to facilitate play within designated and closed groups of friends or family.”<sup>136</sup>*

*“Be more consistent & communicate better & explain the reasoning behind decisions.”<sup>137</sup>*

*“Please, please look after our children’s’ mental health. If they become poorly it takes years for them to recover.”<sup>138</sup>*

*“They stopped blaming young people for what they failed to prevent.”<sup>139</sup>*

170. The Panel questioned the Minister for Children and Education in relation to what his view was on whether a post-COVID-19 strategy specifically for children and young people should be developed and gave the following answer:

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

*Is that a specific recovery strategy aimed at children or do you think it is one where children are just part of it?*

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

*I think we need to just be aware that we need to get back to normal. I think a strategy, in its very outset, does not do that because it tries to define what we should be doing. We should just be aware of it.<sup>140</sup>*

171. The Minister went on to further elaborate on this point in terms of getting back to normal and provided the following view to the Panel:

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

*That is around making sure that our mental health services are where they are so we can start bringing children back. We are aware of what is going on and we are already putting plans in place right now to effect some of the things that we have seen that have been exasperated over COVID. I do not think a specific strategy that was set out would work as such. We are not out of the pandemic. We do not know when the end of the pandemic will be. We need to start carrying on dealing with what we are dealing with right now in the best way we*

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<sup>135</sup> 4insight report

<sup>136</sup> 4insight report

<sup>137</sup> 4insight report

<sup>138</sup> 4insight report

<sup>139</sup> 4insight report

<sup>140</sup> Public Hearing – Minister for Children and Education – 4<sup>th</sup> February 2022

*can to mitigate the challenges that children have and start working towards what does normal look like. That is my view as a Minister.*<sup>141</sup>

172. Ultimately, when pressed further as to whether a separate strategy should be put in place, the Minister stated that he did not think it was required for the reasons outlined previously.<sup>142</sup>

173. The Panel is of the view that, given the issues outlined in the Panel Advisers' report, the findings of the focus groups and the Government's commitment to putting children first, it would be an oversight to not bring forward a standalone strategy in relation to the recovery for children and young people post-pandemic.

### Finding 38

The Panel's Advisers concluded that a specific post-COVID-19 strategy in respect of children and young people should be brought forward to address the various cross cutting impacts which have developed as a result of the pandemic. This view is not shared by the Minister for Children and Education who is of the opinion that more focus should be placed on dealing with the issues as they exist in order to help mitigate the challenges that children have.

### Recommendation 19

The Minister for Children and Education(s) should, as a matter of priority, develop and publish a comprehensive post-COVID-19 strategy specifically in relation to the recovery for children and young people which encompasses all key domains of their lives (e.g. education, social and emotional wellbeing, physical and mental health, economic security). The Minister(s) must ensure that Government departments serving children's needs are sufficiently resourced in order to address the recovery of all Jersey children from the pandemic, therefore, the strategy should include a funding review, whereby budgetary allocations are more in line with those assigned to recovering the economy.

<sup>141</sup> Public Hearing – Minister for Children and Education – 4<sup>th</sup> February 2022

<sup>142</sup> Public Hearing – Minister for Children and Education – 4<sup>th</sup> February 2022

## 8. Conclusion

The Covid-19 Pandemic has been one of the greatest challenges to the Island since the Second World War and, as such, the impacts on all sections of society have been profound. However, the impact on children and young people is especially important to identify and mitigate given the longer-term impacts on their development that could arise as a result. This report provides a snapshot in time as to the impacts on children and young people and continuous monitoring will be required in order to ensure any further issues are identified early and addressed in order to protect children and young people. The Panel will be recommending in its legacy report that further examination of the impact of the pandemic on children and young people is assessed by its successor Panel. Overall, the Panel found two key themes arising from the voice of children and young people from this review. Firstly, it is clear that children and young people reported a mixture of positive and negative impacts as a result of the pandemic. We also found, direct from children and young people, that they did not always feel that they had been put first during the response to the pandemic.

It is incredibly important to note that the response to the pandemic has had to be undertaken at pace and the Panel would like to pay tribute to all the front-line staff who have ensured children are able to continue their education, socialise with their peers and develop in as 'normal' a way as possible throughout this difficult period. Whilst not every decision that has been taken will have been gotten right first time, it is important for the Panel to stress that, from the evidence received, the Government of Jersey has clearly strived to do the best for children and young people in especially trying circumstances. The Panel has made recommendations which it hopes will provide constructive assistance and feedback on the response up until September 2021 that can be implemented going forward.

The following key highlights that the Panel have identified of note throughout this review have been as follows:

- The impact of children and young people not being able to socialise during the pandemic must be considered and any issues arising from this addressed by Government.
- The Panel is especially concerned about reports on the rise of foodbank usage, as well as potential pockets of hidden poverty that may have been exacerbated by the pandemic directly affecting children. The Government of Jersey must establish the full extent of foodbank usage in 2022 and also ensure a review is conducted to assess the barriers to preventing and overcoming poverty in the Island.
- Ensuring children's learning was maintained throughout the pandemic has been a strength of the Government of Jersey's response and the Panel would commend all those who have ensured this has continued. There is, however, concern that the full impact on children's learning will not be known for some time and the Minister must continue to monitor and address any emerging issues with adequate funding as a matter of priority.
- One of the positive impacts to come out of the pandemic has been that children have been able to spend more time with their families as a result of flexible working arrangements that have been adopted over time. The pandemic has taught us that work in some cases does not need to be in an office environment and the States Employment Board should seek to maintain these flexible arrangements post-pandemic in order to further promote the family friendly approach.



- Finally, the Panel has recommended that a post-Covid-19 recovery strategy specific for children and young people is brought forward as a matter of priority. This should focus on all key domains of a child's life including education, social and emotional well-being, physical and mental health and economic security.

Finally, the Panel would like to place on record its thanks to all the children and young people who contributed to this review, whether as part of the focus groups, completing a survey or sending back a postcard. It is the view of the Panel that the voice of the child should be placed firmly at the heart of decision making and it is happy to reflect the views presented within our recommendations to Government.

## 9. Appendix One – Advisers' Report

**Covid-19 Response: Impact on wellbeing of Children and Young  
People: Advisor's Report**

***Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel***

**July 2021**

**Dr Ceri Brown and Dr Michael Donnelly**

## Introduction

In March 2021 we were commissioned by the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel to provide specialist assistance to the Panel to support its undertaking of a review of the impact of the Covid-19 response in Jersey and its impact on children and young people. Our terms of reference were:

1. To identify and assess the Government of Jersey's response to the Covid-19 pandemic in respect of actions and decisions taken affecting children and young people from conception to aged 25.
2. To assess the decisions taken affecting children and young people arising from STAC advice and their appropriateness and proportionality and also the ethos, culture and processes in relation to children and families within key decision-making bodies such as Council of Ministers, Competent Authorities, Emergencies Council and Government Departments
3. To gather and examine the views of children, young people and their families in relation to the actions and decisions taken to date affecting them in respect of the Covid-19 pandemic response.
4. To identify and assess the ongoing workstreams to assist children and young people in the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and how the Government of Jersey is learning from the experience (both positive and negative) of children and young people.

This report details our findings from undertaking this work, drawing on knowledge about child development from conception to age 25 that has emerged over decades of research on the topic spanning multiple disciplines. The appropriateness of the Government of Jersey's response is assessed against this evidence-base on the developmental needs of children and young people at crucial phases. We evaluate the actions taken in light of these developmental needs - and assess the extent to which the pandemic's impact was mitigated. Attention is also paid to the culture, ethos and processes that were apparent within key decision-making bodies. In doing so, an assessment is made of long-term planning to address the legacy the pandemic has left for children and young people of Jersey.

**Section 1** of this report begins by providing an overview of the developmental needs of children and young people (aged 0-25), drawing on the latest available evidence, and assessing the likely disruptive impact of the pandemic at each phase. This evidence informs our evaluation of the Government's response, which is outlined in **section 2**, paying particular attention to actions taken, their appropriateness, proportionality, as well as the culture, ethos and processes that surrounded them. **Section 3** turns to future planning to address the lasting legacy of the pandemic - providing an evaluation of these plans in relation to children's developmental needs and the impact of the pandemic on them. We conclude in section 4 with putting forward 6 key recommendations going forward.

## **SECTION 1**

### **The Pandemic's impact on developmental needs of children and young people**

This first section provides an overview of the developmental needs of children and young people, drawing on the large body of work in this area published across the domains of education, psychology and sociology. Drawing on this interdisciplinary evidence base is crucial to ensure the complexity of children and young people's development is considered - taking into account individual behaviour, feelings, and emotions together with how these are shaped by society and interact with the social domain. There are considered to be distinct phases in the development of children and young people (conception to age 5, age 6-12, age 12-17, and age 18-25) - the crucial developmental issues at each of these phases is presented. Importantly, an assessment is provided of how the pandemic could potentially interrupt / disrupt / challenge each of these phases in a child's life - paying specific attention to the context of Jersey. This review also pays special attention to marginalised and vulnerable segments of society.

#### **Child development in the early years (conception to age 5)**

The early years reflect a critical period in terms of children's social, emotional, and psychological development. The peak of children's brain development occurs by the time the child is three years old, by which time it is 80% fully formed (Cao et al. 2017) and by aged four years this extends to 90% (Thompson and Nelson 2001). The significance of this period is instrumental for children's wellbeing in the here and now, through affecting children's ability to learn, problem solve and in shaping their relationships with others. But brain development in the early years also has long term effects through impacting later potential to work, contribute to society and even the individual's sense of fulfilment and life satisfaction (UNICEF, 2017, ii). It is crucial that any disruption at this age brought about through the pandemic is addressed through policy measures, to prevent any lasting scarring effects in the long term – and one of our key points for assessing the Jersey response rests here.

One of the ways in which children's development is affected in these ways, has been explained through attachment theory (Bowlby 1970), which concerns the child's early relationship quality with what is known as their 'primary caregiver' (normally the mother, father, or guardian) who becomes their 'attachment figure'. The most important aspect of the child's relationship with their attachment figure is in their ability to draw from it a sense of safety and security. These early relationships set up a patterned way of thinking that extends into adulthood, concerning how to cope with a threatening situation, the chances of feeling able to obtain care and support from others, and how we manage our negative emotions, as well as to what extent we can trust in current and future interpersonal relationships (Mikulincer 2009). If the child develops a secure attachment relationship with their primary caregiver, they will foster a self-belief that the world is inherently trustworthy and that people are worthy of trust. When the child inevitably encounters stressful, threatening, or challenging situations down the line, they will feel able to cope with their own emotional responses and to seek support from others. Unfortunately, however, the opposite is also the case; when children develop an insecure attachment to their attachment figure,

they are less likely to trust in the world and the future significant relationships that they go on to develop. This can lead children towards developing behaviour patterns characterised by being either avoidant towards close intimate relationships (Cassidy 2001) or being highly anxious and needy within them (Ainsworth 1967; 1978). Fundamentally, children who develop an insecure attachment relationship in early childhood are less likely to see themselves as worthy of love and care. Given that children's relationships have such an important role in their communication, learning, and wellbeing, attachment theory has become a dominant approach across many western countries including in the US and UK and is frequently included within educator and practitioner training programmes in schooling, early years provision and social work. In doing so it underpins a central argument for why maternal and familial wellbeing is such an important factor to consider when reflecting on children's current and future life chances and happiness. While Bowlby's influential theories have firmly scored the importance of studying parent-child relationships on children's later outcomes, more recent research (e.g., Lai and Carr 2018) has explored the mediating impact of contextual challenges and stressors in dampening parents' ability to provide, and children's facility to receive, - the fundamental sense of security and safety that form the essential building blocks for how they see and *do* relationships.

In reviewing the impact of what is arguably the most pressing challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; the COVID 19 pandemic, a key aspect of children's development to consider are the ways in which children's relationships within the home have been affected – including the critical building of strong attachments. It is therefore essential to consider the social and psychological stressors induced by Covid upon children's close family relationships, which invariably points towards the quality of children's home situations, relationships and environments as mediators for the pandemic's impact on children in early childhood. For example, the stress induced by economic hardship or ill health could have significantly impacted on parents' abilities to provide the same level of care, threatening children's attachments. On the other hand, social distancing measures and 'stay at home' orders may have increased the quality of time spent between children and their primary care giver, strengthening their attachment.

Children's social and emotional development is also dependent upon the quality of relationships and the physical presence of key caregivers. Green et al. (2020b) provide compelling evidence for how facial movement, expressions and the visual conveyance of emotions play an essential role in brain development right from the moment of birth. These skills play an important role in children's later social interaction, through initiating the ability to gauge other people's emotional states and the awareness to adapt behaviour accordingly. Indeed, research has indicated that babies learn how to read core positive and negative emotions from only a few days old (Palama et al. 2018) and link facial expressions of emotions with the appropriate verbal utterances by five months old (Rigato et al. 2011). The extent to which we learn to 'read' emotions from facial expressions is such a fundamental aspect of human's social and emotional development that by 5 years old children are as competent as adults (LoBlue 2016) suggesting that empathy, compassion and understanding for others are all qualities that we formulate through early childhood.

One of the key impacts of Covid measures in the early years has been in relation to the use of personal protective clothing and particularly mask wearing. One key area of concern has been



the impact that mask wearing can have upon bonding and attachment both for babies (Green et al. 2020a) and infants (Sullivan et al. 2020) and their primary caregivers. While studies have yet to uncover the long-term impacts of mask wearing upon children's social and emotional development, experts have speculated that the disruption to children's ability to process facial expressions could have long term effects. This is especially in the case of children who have hearing difficulties and are therefore particularly reliant on visual cues such as lip-reading, facial expressions (Schlögl and Jones 2020).

It is only in the last 50 years or so that policymakers and the general public have become aware of the fundamental importance of literacy development within the home and informal arenas of children's life worlds (McLachlan and Arrow 2017). Accordingly, researchers have developed a growing interest in what has been termed 'emergent literacy' (Clay 1966) to explain the literacy learning that takes place within the home and other informal learning arenas such as childcare settings and public spaces, where pre-school age children will start the early process of reading and writing through number and letter recognition. In calling attention towards the importance of family and significant adult relationships as the child's first educators, Janet Goodall (2013), has pointed to the multiple literacy opportunities that small children enjoy through accompanying their caregivers through the routines and domestic duties of daily life. The bus numbers of daily commutes, signs on the doctor's centre and playparks, the price of groceries, are examples of literacy opportunities that children may have missed out during the 'stay-at-home' order and especially in the cases where families are shielding or where the public spaces of daily life have been shut down to families. However, literacy is not the only channel by which children in the early years learn and communicate, rather all children's senses are important and indeed even before learning how to speak, children explore and try to make sense of the world around them by touching, tasting, smelling, seeing, moving and hearing. Touch in particular assumes a critical importance not only from an educational perspective, as the vehicle through which to learn the properties of materials, temperature, and as a safety mechanism to avoid pain, but also from a social and emotional perspective. Indeed, a body of work has emerged concerning the therapeutic value of touch in building children's sense of themselves as separate but distinctive from the world around them (Barnard, & Brazelton, 1990; Field, 1995; 2003) and essential for building relationships in the early years (including attachment relationships), developing a sense of the self and other and a sense of protection, security, trust (Courtney and Gray 2014). As a seminal theorist in the therapeutic study of touch Viola Brody has argued that repeated body contact, with a caring adult will develop a solid sense of their body seen as a "home" or "centering place" (Brody, 1997 p. 161).

While relationships and wellbeing are cornerstones to all aspects of children's development, it is also important to consider the impact of COVID-19 on language development and its role in the essential function of communication, as well as its applied function in learning and education. It is therefore of key importance to consider the impact of the pandemic upon children's sensory and educational development in the early years through both limiting children's access to public and outdoor spaces and social settings as well as in response to valid health concerns regarding the dangers of touching both people and objects outside of the home for fear of viral transmission. Any long-term plans to address these impacts of the pandemic need to take account of how it has limited opportunities not only materially and educationally, but also in these more visceral and sensory ways.

## **Middle childhood (age 6-12)**

While in infancy children's focus is disproportionately upon parental relationships, the period starting later in early childhood and extending into the period of middle childhood reflects a growing interest in children's friendships. As frequently the first significant relationships that children develop outside of the family (Bell and Coleman 1999) friendships are of fundamental importance to develop their own social identities and peer culture as separate from the family (Corsaro 2003). Friendships are essential for children's social and emotional development as the vehicle through which children start to feel a part of society and trust in the social world that exists outside of the family. Most children will start nursery and pre-school (and later school) and research has demonstrated that the importance of continuity in nurturing new friendships and in orientating themselves to new educational settings outside of the home (Schwarz 1972, Ispa 1981). It is therefore particularly important to consider the impact of school closures on children who have recently experienced school transition, for example those in their first year of primary school and secondary school, for whom the stay-at-home order will have affected emergent and fragile relationships with friends, peers and teachers, that may well have both social and educational impacts.

Indeed, while for parents' educational achievements are frequently the primary objective of schooling, for children it is often their friendships and peer relationships which makes daily school life most meaningful (Brown 2014b). Friendships have been also found to play an important part in children's sense of wellbeing in school and ability to cultivate pro-schooling and pro-educational attitudes (Ladd and Kochenderfer 1996; Wentzel, Barry, and Caldwell 2004). It is unsurprisingly, therefore that friendships have also been found to link with children's academic achievement (Berndt and Keefe 1995; Wentzel and Caldwell 1997). One of the ways that this has been explained is through the role of friendship in shaping children's social and learner identities in school (Brown 2014b). A body of work exists that has explored how children start to develop a learner identity and its central importance in learning and achievement (Pollard 1985; Pollard with Filer 1996; Pollard and Filer 1999). At the heart of this work has been the importance for children of pro-educational relationships within the three social spheres of their lives; the family, friends and peers and lastly, teachers. Pollard and colleagues have argued for the importance of these three spheres aligning in order for the child to be able to generate an identity as a valued and contributing member of the school community. Children need their families, friends, and teachers all to recognise learning as important, achievable and to receive praise and endorsement for learning achievements in order to develop a secure learner identity. At the heart of a secure learner identity is a self-confident learner, as well as a self-belief in being accepted as a valued member of a learning community. This security is so essential according to Pollard and colleagues because all learning requires the leap of faith necessary to cross a ravine representing a gap in knowledge to be filled. It is this sense of security that forms a requirement in order for children to be able to take the risk necessary in order to achieve a learning challenge. Children's learner identity will determine whether the learning 'risk' is seen as a threat to be feared for the risk of falling into the chasm in the ravine, or whether it is an exciting challenge to be overcome and achieved. For example, the child that feels accepted by their peers and teacher will not feel their identity will be threatened by getting the answer wrong, so will be the first to volunteer for a learning challenge or to put up their hands to answer a question, while the insecure child

will be afraid of the repercussions of failure so will keep their eyes down or will distract their friends from the teacher instruction. This work gives pause for thought concerning the shift to distance learning brought about through the stay-at-home order, especially during the critical phase of middle childhood, where children's learner identities are less concretely formed.

While romantic relationships are frequently described in terms of 'opposites attract' children's friendships are far more likely to be based on similarities between children. This has mainly been explored in relation to key factors such class, gender and ethnicity (Berndt 1996), but has also been applied to children's characteristics and attitudes such that high academic achievers are more likely to be friends with other high academic achievers, dominant children prefer other outgoing children, while shy children tend to befriend shy children (Rubin et al. 2008). This is especially the case during middle childhood where children's friendships are more likely to be based on shared interests and aptitudes, than the deeper forms of emotional connection and identity initiated during adolescence. It is also interesting to note that while, girls' friendships tend to be more intimate and emotionally based within one-to-one relationships (Parker & Asher, 1993); boys tend to have larger friendship groups whereby friendships are more equal and involve less rivalry for closeness between friends (Maccoby, 1995). These different friendship types have an influence on how children engage in, perform and *do* friendships. For example, boys' friendships in primary schools tend to be more visible and defined by shared interests and pursuits, while girls tend to be bonded by sharing secrets and confiding in emotional aspects such as worries and concerns (Brown 2014a). In this sense boys' friendships are more activities based, while girls are more talk based. This has implications in a stay-at-home scenario because girls may be better equipped to maintain their friendships in the absence of face-to-face and physical contact, while boys may feel more isolated from the activities that bond them to their friends and who are also less likely to be able to share their concerns and anxieties.

It is also particularly important to consider the friendship implications of the COVID response upon vulnerable children. Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are less likely to develop friendships in comparison to their typically developing peers (Heslop, 2005; Avramidis and Wilde, 2010) and have been found to have less successful friendships and peer relations than those who were typically developing (Broomhead 2019). They are also more likely to be excluded both inside of and outside of school and spend far more leisure time with their parents or siblings than their peers (Higley, 2016). The literature encompassing social acceptance indicates that when children are accepted by their peers, they experience less loneliness and are more engaged in learning (Newcomb et al, 1993). Alternatively, children who are not socially accepted suffer academically, as well socially and emotionally, which continues into adulthood (Odom et al, 2006; Walker et al, 2001). In assessing the measures put in place within Jersey, and the long-term actions taken to mitigate the pandemic's lasting impact, it is crucial that our analysis takes into account differentiated groups of children - including the most vulnerable SEND groups.

### **Adolescence (age 12-17)**

Adolescence also encompasses some major transition points in children's educational choices, which have consequences for their future post-school transitions. It is a time when

there are key turning points, which set in motion the possible paths that will be open and closed for young people. For example, performance in GCSE examinations play a critical role in not only whether young people can progress to A-level study or training opportunities, but also universities increasingly look at prior GCSE performance to further differentiate students, especially the most selective universities. The Jersey system maps closely on to the English curricular and qualifications framework - which has been described as a 'high stakes' testing regime whereby performance in public examinations plays a crucial role in future life chances (West, 2010). A key consideration here is how the school closures impacted on achievement gaps according to social class, race and gender. We know that achievement gaps between the richest and poorest groups were already wide globally before the pandemic, having knock-on effects for university participation (Chmielewski, 2019). Research shows that the home and parenting practices of more privileged groups are often much more conducive to academic study than is the case for their disadvantaged peers (Spera, 2005) and that parental support at home has been demonstrated to lead to greater academic achievement and increased child motivation (Gonida and Cortina 2014). Furthermore, research into the impact of the stay-at-home order on children's home learning has demonstrated that those on low -incomes have had less time to support their children with home-learning due to additional pressures such as financial stressors and mental health difficulties (Alexander et al 2021). It is, therefore, important to assess how the measures put in place have guarded against a further widening of the achievement gap, and the extent to which they mitigated against disadvantage. It is also crucial to assess the extent of any 'scarring' on the long-term attainment of different groups - especially those in the lower phases of secondary education, for whom measures can be put in place now to help them 'catch up' in the years to come.

Adolescence is also a time when children further develop their sporting, social and cultural interests – and parenting practices are crucial here, with Lareau (2002) using the concept of 'concerted cultivation' to describe the intensive efforts of middle-class parents to foster the artistic, sporting and musical talents of their children. The school clubs and activities are crucial here for poorer groups who might not have the same support and encouragement from home. Adolescence is also a time when career goals and children's enjoyment of particular subjects become more solidified, especially as they progress through the specialist subjects, they study at secondary school – for example, learning to love physics (Cleaves, 2005). There is research to show that for the most disadvantaged students the school can play a pivotal role in shaping their career and subject choices (Bennett et al., 2013). From practical experiments in the science laboratory to geography fieldtrips, school experiences can play a crucial role in helping children find out what they enjoy. Whilst many middle-class parents are likely to have tried to maintain these experiences the best they could (e.g., actively researching learning opportunities or experiences) it is likely the most disadvantaged families will not have had the time or capacity to provide such experiences. It will be important to assess not only the way school closures affected achievement at school, but also these more subtle informal conversations that help guide and support student transitions.

Adolescence assumes a critical period in children's lives where their bodies are changing rapidly at the same time as young people are increasingly looking outside of the family to society in negotiating their social identities (Botta 1999). This has historically been shown to create challenges in societies where a thin and sculpted body ideal has been dominant across western nations (Becker 2004). The discordance between a prevailing societal body ideal that

favours thinness and the physiological changes during adolescence has been highlighted as particularly problematic for teenager's sense of self-esteem and confidence given that it is a time when children's bodies are becoming bigger and wider, and for young women more fleshy, rounded and voluptuous (Piper 1994). This is pertinent to consider with respects to the stay-at home order and restrictions in access to public spaces such as leisure and sports centres given that young people will have had limited opportunities to recreational activities and are more likely to shift to sedentary lifestyle patterns, with associated psychological and health impacts. On the one hand is the risk to childhood obesity, the second most chronic of all teenage conditions (Park et al. 2013). On the other hand, is the risk of developing disordered eating and body image disturbances, which is particularly a concern for teenage girls. Underpinning both issues are the shared concerns of low self-esteem and associated risk for leading onto other mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression, as well as the limitations upon therapeutic services and young people's isolation which will inevitably make both help-seeking as well as the identification of young people that may require support.

It is not only children's bodies that are developing rapidly towards adulthood during adolescence, but also their minds and identities. This period is a critical one in which young people will start to develop and explore their sexualities. Research into adolescence has shown that school is an important social arena for young people to perform both masculine and feminine identities, which has been shown to be an importance function of young people's schooling lives, that they strive to balance against their academic achievements (Francis et al. 2010). Where young people's school lives are therefore shut down, and they are restricted from attending social events and opportunities such in a stay-at-home scenario, there are risks concerning where young people may turn to in exploring their sexual identities. It may be that children are turning increasingly to social media and the internet in compensation for real-world opportunities to socialise and perform their sexual identities with peers and school mates. Inherent in this is the risk incurred where young people may be communicated with those who they don't know, including criminals. A recent report by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF 2021) showed the growing risk of online grooming, bullying and coercion to children, particularly girls, aged 11-13 in being targeted by criminal sex predators.

It is not just adolescents' sexual identities, but also their gendered identities. A body of research in social psychology has developed what is termed social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979) to explain the process by which young people form social group cliques as a way of developing a sense of group membership and fitting in (Sherriff 2007). When applied to the study of adolescent boys' friendship groups, a wealth of research conducted over three decades has highlighted the prominence of three prevailing groups within schools; the 'hard-workers' the 'sporty and popular' and the 'unconventional outsiders' (see Brown 2014a). For each of these groups the disruption from their friendship groups can be seen to have a major impact both on young peoples' opportunities to develop and perform gendered identities, but also can be seen to affect their schoolwork. This impact may be particularly profound for boys for whom practising sport and their sports team is a big part of their gendered identities. This is especially the case given that sport has been identified as a major deterrent from young people engaging in crime and anti-social behaviours such as drinking, smoking and crime

(Sport and Recreational Alliance 2021) which is why it forms such a major part of adolescent intervention programmes for young people who are disengaged.

Given that adolescence is the period of childhood in which young people are most likely to engage in social comparison in forming their identities (Reimer Sacks 2014) it is important to consider the impact of the home-learning requirement as an opportunity by which school children gain a window into the homelives of their peers. Tess Ridge (2002) has discussed the particular pressures on children in poverty within affluent societies, such as the UK (and Jersey) whereby consumption practices, such as what clothes, music and experiences children participate assume a significant importance for young people (as they do later in adulthood). As a result, the material kinds of deprivation brought about by being in poverty are all the more amplified by the shame and exclusion it may lead to for young people. The requirement to participate in synchronous online learning opportunities with peers, as a common feature of schools' response to supporting learning during lockdown, may be particularly problematic to children in poverty, who may lack the space, and privacy to participate in online lessons. In addition to the internet and device limitations of their young peers, however, young people of this age group may also feel a sense of shame or reluctance to invite their peers and teachers into their home lives in the ways invoked through remote learning. Anecdotal evidence from teachers suggests children from disadvantaged backgrounds are prone either to turn off their cameras during synchronous lessons or not join in at all, which both interrupts their opportunities to engage in learning, as well as further socially excludes them from their more advantaged peers.

Finally, it is imperative to consider the mental health implications of the Covid pandemic on young people given that mental health disorders have been attributed as the leading cause of disability for young people, with figures indicating that they affect 10-20% of children and adolescents worldwide (Bor et al 2014). Adolescence has been found to be the period of childhood in which mental health problems are most likely to emerge, with half of all mental illnesses found to start by the age of 14 and three-quarters by mid-20s (WHO 2021). Covid has since amplified such concerns with young people's mental health more likely to be affected than adults (Henderson et al. 2020). A recent study in the UK found that three in five young people felt more worried, anxious and depressed than before the pandemic. About half felt less useful and less optimistic about the future and over 60% felt less connected to their friends and significant others (Green et al, 2021pii). Findings highlighted that COVID-19 had both direct consequences for mental distress and indirect consequences for mental distress via learning loss and loss of social connectedness (ibid). Mental health and more general social and emotional wellbeing is therefore likely to be one of the most significant impacts of both the Covid pandemic and the actions taken in response to it, and has therefore been a major part of our focus in relation to the Jersey government's response.

### **Young people (age 18-25)**

The European Union defines a 'young person' as aged 18-24 (European Commission 2015) though scholars have argued that youth extends well beyond this point, as today's younger generation are increasingly dependent on their families in light of more protracted labour market transitions. Having left the compulsory phase of schooling, this is the point in time when young people are experiencing their next transition point in education / training /



employment, or for some, are still navigating their options and in a period of not in education, employment or training (often referred to in the UK as 'NEET').

This point in time represents one of the first major shifts to greater independence a person will experience in their lives and will be experienced as a hugely pressured and possibly anxiety-inducing time point. Compulsory schooling provides somewhat of a 'cushion' for young people, and this is the first time they have to adapt quickly to coping more independently. It is especially pressured in individualising and neoliberal contexts because the onus is on the individual to navigate their own way through the maze of options, to make the 'right' choices which is a source of huge pressure. This is likely to have been hugely disrupted by the pandemic especially for those who left compulsory schooling phase without a 'next destination' in place – and is likely to have resulted in a greatly protracted period of being 'NEET' at age 18-25 than would have been the case if the pandemic had not happened. For example, employers halted recruitment of new staff owing to economic worries, affecting young people in particular. The pandemic will have likely had a hugely disruptive impact on this group of young people – and the limited employment opportunities in Island states would have exacerbated this further. Periods of being NEET in a young person's life has been found to have multiple lasting effects; it can hamper long term employment, emotional and mental health problems and has been associated with social problems and challenges such as likelihood of crime, youth suicide etc. (Archambault et al. 2019; Cedefop 2016; D'Angelo and Kaye 2018; European Commission 2015; Gerhartz-Reiter 2017). It is crucial that any assessment of measures put in place within Jersey examine the extent to which they took account of this group of young people who will likely have been facing significant challenges.

For those young people in higher education, the pandemic would have been especially difficult in terms of their disruption to learning, financial challenges owing to a lack of temporary work, mental health effects and the huge logistical challenges in travel between the UK and Jersey (not to mention the extra costs here). The 'lockdown' periods brought the closure of borders which would have created significant challenge for students studying outside of Jersey. In assessing the measures put in place, it is important to consider the extent to which students studying overseas were considered and the way measures accounted for their needs. In recent years there has been growing concern about the wellbeing of students in higher education (Duffy et al., 2020), student suicide (Stanley et al., 2009), and there is evidence that overseas students fare much worse in terms of struggles with wellbeing and mental health (Forbes-Mewett and Sawyer, 2019). The majority of Jersey students' study in UK-based universities, and whilst they may not face the same kind of challenges to do with cultural, linguistic and social isolation, it may be the case that for those without family living in the UK the pandemic caused huge stress of being isolated and unable to return home when they needed to. It is likely to have been especially challenging for first year students who are unlikely to have established social networks of support in the same way as those further ahead in their studies. These pressures are likely to have greatly affected the poorest higher education students. Students studying in higher education are increasingly reliant upon part-time, casual employment to help fund their studies – jobs which they often secure on an ad-hoc basis when needed (Callender, 2008). As the cost of higher education has increasingly been met by students themselves, and as accommodation and other costs have been rising this income source is becoming a lifeline for many. The pandemic had the greatest impact on these kinds of jobs – bars, restaurants, and cafes where students often work were closed for

significant periods. For those without family members to support them in their time at university, it could have created a perilous situation which demanded urgent measures to mitigate.

There is a large body of research on the relationship between social class, race and ethnicity on encounters and experiences within higher education – with the culture of universities and university students found to be isolating for ‘non-traditional’ students (those who do not have family experience of having attended university). For this group of students, university life can be characterised as a painful experience along identity lines, often associated with feelings of ‘not fitting in’ or feeling what has been referred to as an ‘outsider within’ (Clayton et al., 2009, Reay et al., 2010, Reay et al., 2009). These experiences, together with the increased financial challenges of those from working class backgrounds, are often associated with a higher drop-out rate for disadvantaged groups (Breier, 2010). In any long-term planning, it is crucial to examine whether the pandemic affected this group of students and could make them more prone to dropping out.

## SECTION 2

### Evaluating the Government of Jersey's response

Research and evidence on children and young people's development outlined above is used here to evaluate the Government of Jersey's response to the impact of the pandemic. In particular, attention is paid to the appropriateness and adequacy of the Government of Jersey's response and the extent to which this mitigated the impact of the pandemic on children and young people in Jersey. A range of evidence is reviewed, including written submissions by groups and organisations, interviews with key stakeholders (former Ministers, Government officials, advocacy groups), and focus group research with young people (carried out by 4Insight). The evaluation of the Government of Jersey's response is assessed with specific reference given to vulnerable groups and across a wide age range from conception to age 25.

The evaluation of how Jersey responded is presented in chronological order according to the key phases of how the pandemic unfolded, beginning with the initial lockdown period in March 2020.

#### March 2020 – June 2020

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 the first recorded case of COVID-19 was publicly disclosed. Following rising cases, the government responded quickly in announcing on 23<sup>rd</sup> March the closure of schools, colleges and nurseries with the exception of Mont al'Abbé school serving children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Following guidance from the Medical Officer for Health, schools were asked to continue to provide care for the children of critical workers accessing school nursery to Year 8, and for those accessing school nursery to Year 13 for vulnerable children. From the 30<sup>th</sup> of March borders were closed for all but essential travel and Islanders were placed under 'lockdown' following a physical distancing strategy and a stay-at-home order. While essential travel was permitted within the island, travel on and off the island was restricted. As the key referral point for children and families facing challenges, the Children and Families Hub was launched at the same time as schools closed ahead of its planned launch in September. The role of the hub was in order to provide advice and signposting to families as well as to respond to safeguarding concerns about a child or young person. In response to reports from the Jersey Police of a sharp increase in domestic incidences (14% March-June) and welfare concerns (37% increase March-June) Jersey government launched a safeguarding campaign on the 14<sup>th</sup> April, encouraging islanders to 'to be our "eyes and ears" in the community and report any safeguarding concerns'. Schools, nurseries and colleges remained closed to the majority of children and young people until June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020.

#### *The effects of school closure on 'vulnerable' children*

Given the responsiveness of the Jersey government to protect the physical health of Islanders in taking a 'suppress, contain, shield' (COVID-19 Strategy June 2020), the chief area of impact on children's development to consider in relation to the Jersey government's first response,

is with respects to the effects of lock-down on children and their removal from the social, learning and developmental settings of childcare, nursery, school, college or higher education that play a part in children's daily lives. It is notable that the government were quick to recognise 'the need to help essential workers with the childcare and education of their children' (News release statement from the Education Minister 20th March) as well as 'the need to support vulnerable children and their families' (ibid). However, the looseness in definitional terms of what constitutes vulnerability was evident within official documentation, and according to Ministers and officials interviewed through the scrutiny review process, was understood primarily in terms of those for whom there are safeguarding concerns, such as those in Care, or on the child protection register who were automatically entitled to a school/nursery place. Further, within the classification of 'vulnerability' were those children with an identified special educational needs or disabilities attending the state-maintained specialist school Mont al'Abbé. However, not all children identified with Special Needs were automatically entitled to school provision and submissions referred to the challenge for parents of meeting educational provision for children who were unable to access schools. One parent of a child with autism commented:

*"We didn't take education very seriously, not gonna put extra pressure on them, my son was assessed for autism, so taking him in and out of school frustrated him."*

(4Insight Focus group research mother of a 10-year-old child)

There was something of a blindsidedness, however, concerning the vulnerability of children and young people living in poverty in terms of the effects of school closure and lockdown. This point was underpinned by a number of submissions from the public and substantiated in view of the challenges raised by young people themselves affected. For example, one young person reported the difficulties of life during lockdown in living with 15 other household members, while other young people reported financial and technological barriers that prevented them from keeping in touch with friends and extended family members. Of notable concern was a gap in planning around the equitable access to education during lockdown in terms of adequate access to IT equipment and Wifi access. This is something which has been shown to disproportionately affect the poorest households, who may not have good Wifi access or have a limited number of appropriate electronic devices (Bonal and Gonzalez 2021).

As many have argued, there is a huge difference between siblings sharing a single Iphone over the kitchen table to access their learning compared to a child having their own desktop computer in their own quiet bedroom (see Purdy 2020). The educational impact of months under these conditions is likely to have been significant. One school reported in a submission identified that access to a device was the key reason attributed to children not engaging in home-learning. It was alarming to see that the Jersey Government did not seem conscious of the need to ensure equitable access to learning was in place for all Islanders. Early in the initial phase of school closure, it was a third-sector organisation that was lobbying Government to ensure children had equitable access to IT equipment. It was later the same charity which provided such equipment funded by themselves at a reported cost of £250,000. The concern here lies with whether officials are conscious, aware and appropriately 'tuned into' the needs of those from the poorest backgrounds – who, whilst a minority in the context of Jersey, are likely to have been most affected by school closures.

The Government's response, in our view, seems to speak to a cultural problem within the heart of Government, in terms of what might be key Ministerial decision-makers lacking knowledge about the lived experiences of poverty - and holding assumptions about the nature of parental responsibility. Officials told us that it was questioned why it should be the Government's role to ensure children access education - e.g., funding of laptops - with this deemed to be parental responsibility. There seems to be a culture wherein the Government believe it is not their job to take the place of parents - and responsibility for *all* children principally lies with parents. This stands in stark contrast to what decades of research tells us about differences in parenting between different socio-economic groups. Lareau's (2002) famous study showed that parents' responsibility towards their children, involvement in their child's school, investment in time on activities, and resources provided at home were all related to socio-economic background. Children of higher socio-economic backgrounds will have very different childhood experiences to those of lower socio-economic backgrounds on account of these different parenting styles.

### ***Further barriers to effective learning during lockdown***

Whilst it is clear that not all children on the island will have had a suitable home-learning device or adequate Wifi connectivity, it is also alarming that at the outset of the pandemic schools did not have adequate online platforms to deliver online learning. We understand from education officials that pre-pandemic they were in the process of procuring Microsoft Teams, and it was not until 13<sup>th</sup> April that MS Teams was operational within schools (3 weeks after schools closed), making the initial move to online learning less smooth than it could have been. Schools in the UK, for example, were immediately able to adapt to virtual schooling via the Microsoft Teams platform.

The significance of schools not having this immediate access to Microsoft Teams when schools closed is twofold. First, Microsoft Teams is the preferred platform for schools around the world because of its interface design which allows for easily accessible scheduling classes (with an easy to view calendar), sharing of documents/resources via the group chats, a chat function which allows pupils to contribute to lessons if they do not want to speak online, as well as Teams groups for staff. The functionality allows for the school day to be virtually replicated as would have been the case face-to-face. It would have mitigated any of the immediate disruption to children's learning, especially crucial for those in transitional years and approaching examinations (especially years 10, 11 and 13).

Second, the functionality of Microsoft Teams allows for much greater connectivity between pupils (with the ability to create their own peer support group chats) and between pupils and school staff (with a 1:1 call function). Submitted evidence to the scrutiny review has reported that many children felt 'scared, confused, sad and lonely' during lockdown, in emphasising the importance for children of a regular connection with their peers and teachers using online learning and interactive platforms to support home-learning. It is unfortunate that Microsoft Teams was not immediately available to fill this social and learning void in children's lives - especially when it seems avoidable given it is such a basic resource that many other education systems had to hand immediately.

Concerns were also raised early in the pandemic by the Children’s Commissioner about the material learning resources for primary aged children (pens, paper, colouring pencils etc.) - and the Commissioner had asked Government to provide ‘primary packs’ to fulfil such needs. For younger primary aged children, practical and creative learning activities are essential cornerstones for their learning and development. We agree with the Children’s Commissioner therefore, that schools should have been supported in delivering such resources to the children who needed them. However, the education officials we spoke to were not aware of any such request for the ‘primary packs’ (though this does not negate a seeming lack of awareness that some primary aged children may have such needs). The officials also seemed to indicate it would have been the schools’ role to provide these, though this might not be entirely reasonable given the extra unexpected pressure on school budgets. Other Governments around the world were much more tuned-in to the need to provide these physical learning resources for young children. In Portugal, schools, public and private organisations partnered to provide laptops and internet access to children from disadvantaged backgrounds - when this was not possible, deliveries were arranged for children to receive hard copies of lessons and tasks from schools<sup>1</sup>. In Chile, the Ministry of Education delivered materials to over 380,000 pupils in rural areas and disadvantaged localities with poor internet (even partnering with the national Air Force to ensure materials reached those in most need)<sup>2</sup>. It does seem a missed opportunity that this level of action was not taken in Jersey to ensure continuity of learning, especially for the youngest children who are dependent on physical resources.

### ***Mental and physical health impacts on children through the stay-at-home order***

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that signatories to the convention (of which Jersey is) ‘shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services’ (page 8)<sup>3</sup>. There was clearly some action taken by the Jersey Government to try and reduce financial barriers to healthcare on the island (with some bold immediate responses such as employing doctors directly by the state). But we were alarmed to hear reports of a parent with a sick child being turned away from their GPs surgery because their parent was £3 short of the £10 charge (the GP consultation charge for those aged 5-17). This is just one report we have been made aware of, but it could suggest there were many others. The health officials we spoke with commented that they would hope no GP would do such a thing - but the point is, when the rules are established to allow this to happen, there is no way of stopping every instance. The health of children cannot depend

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-student-equity-and-inclusion-supporting-vulnerable-students-during-school-closures-and-school-re-openings-d593b5c8/#endnotea0z26>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-student-equity-and-inclusion-supporting-vulnerable-students-during-school-closures-and-school-re-openings-d593b5c8/#endnotea0z26>

<sup>3</sup> [https://downloads.unicef.org/uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC\\_united\\_nations\\_convention\\_on\\_the\\_rights\\_of\\_the\\_child.pdf?\\_ad=ww.w.unicef.org.uk.1626370912038&\\_ad\\_ca=so%3DGoogle%26me%3Dorganic%26ca%3D\(not%2520set\)%26co%3D\(not%2520set\)%26ke%3D\(not%2520set\).1626370912038&\\_ad\\_cw=1626370906755.1626370912038&\\_ad\\_id=2354f77a-709d-4506-84b8-9d3dd91a1382.1626370907.2.1626370907.1626370907.1d462ecd-c8fe-40e3-a3dd-64c35e6010f9.1626370912038&\\_ga=2.118386569.1828112861.1626370905-668530324.1626370905](https://downloads.unicef.org/uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf?_ad=ww.w.unicef.org.uk.1626370912038&_ad_ca=so%3DGoogle%26me%3Dorganic%26ca%3D(not%2520set)%26co%3D(not%2520set)%26ke%3D(not%2520set).1626370912038&_ad_cw=1626370906755.1626370912038&_ad_id=2354f77a-709d-4506-84b8-9d3dd91a1382.1626370907.2.1626370907.1626370907.1d462ecd-c8fe-40e3-a3dd-64c35e6010f9.1626370912038&_ga=2.118386569.1828112861.1626370905-668530324.1626370905)



upon the 'good will' of doctors to sidestep rules - the rules themselves need to change so that proper access to healthcare for all children is institutionalised and set out in law (as expected by the UNCRRC). Furthermore, reducing the GP charge to £10 (for those children aged 5-17) may seem on the face of it to be significant - but for those in extreme poverty, £10 is not a minor amount and it could determine whether a family eats or not. Also, having any charge at all is enough to detract some parents in poverty from seeking health care - and the shame, humiliation and guilt of relying on GPs 'good will' would mean many parents do not even attempt to access health when they know they cannot afford to do so. Indeed, there is long standing research on the shame felt of seeking what are perceived of as 'hand outs' - for example, this is a well-documented reason children in poverty do not claim Free School Meals in the UK. We recognise the positive step the Government has taken towards addressing barriers to healthcare for children - especially the introduction of a Health Access Scheme in late 2020<sup>4</sup> - but this scheme is only open to those on Income Support or Pension Plus. Children whose families have not lived on the island for 5 years, and so cannot claim Income Support, will not be assisted with accessing healthcare by this scheme. There is a need to go much further in ensuring equal access to healthcare for all children on the island - just as equal access to education is provided to all, no matter when a child's family arrived.

There is also the question of why it was deemed appropriate to locate a mental health unit within a former prison (Meadowfields). The engagement with young people carried out by charity *Youthful Minds* raised this as a major concern, with young people commenting that this was not an appropriate space to care for mentally vulnerable groups, not least because it had no outdoor space. Indeed, this does seem a highly problematic decision to have taken (no matter how temporary the space was intended to be used for) and even though this unit was later closed, there is a question why it was ever deemed to be appropriate for the site to be chosen in the first place.

As discussed above, adolescence is a time in a young person's life when their bodies are changing rapidly at the same time as they are increasingly looking outside of the family to society in negotiating their social identities. It is an especially challenging time in societies where a thin, sculpted and muscular/toned body is idealised through media and society more broadly. It was therefore concerning to hear reports of children concerned about putting on weight and feeling as though they have nobody to talk to (as mentioned both in focus groups with children and young people and by the Children's Commissioner). Weight gain could have been an inevitable consequence of public outdoor spaces being closed - the poorest groups who are least likely to have a private outdoor space and who will struggle the most in any case to pay for healthy food will have been at greatest risk here.

The loneliness, isolation and pressures at home are likely to have worsened those with pre-existing mental health conditions, as well as causing the development of new mental health concerns (especially anxiety and depression). It was therefore concerning to see reports of mental health provision not being adequate in responding to an increased need. The young people who *Youthful Minds* spoke with raised issues about patients not having a consistent Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) which meant constantly having to repeat their condition and experiences each time, being directed to A&E when raising mental health concerns and

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.je/health/doctordentist/doctors/pages/healthaccessscheme.aspx#anchor-1>

CAMHS not being contactable after 5pm. The recent Children’s Commissioner report (May 2021) voiced concerns about rising caseloads, 7-week waits for children to be assessed and long waits to access care after assessment. But this is just for those who present with problems, the Children’s Commissioner report also draws attention to the fact that there is no clear Government data on Jersey youth with mental health issues. Research by the Commissioner asked children if they were worried about anything - 48% said they were, which was more prevalent for 5–7-year-olds and those 16+, furthermore concerns were raised about:

- Reduced access to mental health services (child and adult) and rapid redesign of provision
- Withdrawal of key workers who were moved to ‘crisis’ response or liaison team
- Home visits replaced with telephone contact
- Home visits not with a consistent professional

At a time of substantial increased need, there is a question here why there is evidence that members of the public felt that this was not being adequately met by Government.

### ***The effects of lockdown on unborn babies and children in the early years***

In total, Islanders experienced 42 days of ‘lockdown’ following the stay-at-home order issued on May 30th, which remained until June 12<sup>th</sup>, at which point it was replaced with a ‘soft-opening’ with physical distancing measures still in place. During this period a total of 94 babies were born in Jersey, each of whom were affected by COVID-19 measures, which required that babies and their families were unable to meet family, friends or physically access and initiate support networks during this time.

Services on the island designed to support preparation for and following birth include.

- a universal free of charge programme including a home visit and six group sessions prior to birth with three sessions after birth,
- anti-natal visits by health visitors,
- mandated home visits to carry out developmental checks with babies aged from birth to aged 2 and a half years old,
- the Maternal and Early Childhood Sustained Home Visiting (MECSH) programme: A structured, evidence-based programme delivered by Health Visitors offered to mothers at risk of less optimal maternal and child health outcomes.

During the stay-at-home order each of these services was provided virtually through videoconferencing or via phone contact, except in the exceptional case where an identified urgent need or concern was seen to warrant a home-visit. Data collected by these vital services indicated that the switch from in-person to remote support affected access somewhat, reflecting a drop from 75% pre-pandemic to 70% of new parents on the island during the period of lock-down. However, it was also reported that the video conferencing of group sessions resulted in a slight increase in fathers being able to access the anti-natal programme. This data suggests that while it is reassuring that the remote access was not a

significant barrier to participation for the majority of islanders, it is nevertheless concerning that 30% of new parents in Jersey did not, -or were not able to,- access the antenatal support. Given what we know about the digital barrier to those in poverty- it is likely that some of the most vulnerable new-borns and their families on the island, will not have been reached.

In considering the impact of the stay-at home measures on the experiences of families of expectant new-born and young children, an insightful report commissioned by Best Start Partnership *42 days and Counting* reported the 'higher levels of anxiety in new parents due to social isolation and the inability to introduce their new babies to families' (p3). Further reported concerns stemmed from the suspension of face-to-face clinics with midwives and baby groups, which are a renowned source of support for new parents in covering common issues such as feeding, and sleeping challenges, developmental concerns and emotional and practical support and guidance in the life changing experience of becoming a new parent. These comments were supported by findings from focus groups conducted with islanders. For example, one parent of a 3 year old with new-born twins born over lockdown commented:

*"I wanted Mum to come and help but can't because she's off island, we had loads of challenges,... everything was closed, weather was nice but couldn't go to the playground".*

(Best Start Partnership 2020)

The physical distancing restrictions at this time also had a significant impact on pregnant mothers. With expectant parents reporting feeling they had 'missed out' both on social support as well as on guidance and preparation for birth and caring for a new-born.

*"Once lockdown happened [my partner] wasn't allowed at any appointments which was awful for both of us. He couldn't hear the heartbeat or any of the information firsthand from midwives. The appointments were shorter and covered less aspects of pregnancy and birth... I ended up seeing a mixture of midwives, so the continuity of care was lower. I didn't really end up building up a relationship with any of them, which I'm sure would have happened had those appointments been at my Drs surgery with the same one or two midwives"*

(Best Start Partnership 2020)

Health officials explained the rationale for preventing partners from attending routine hospital appointments as an attempt to reduce the possibility of transmission of the virus within in the hospital due to concerns both for vulnerable patients but also to protect a 'brittle' workforce. However, it is important not to underestimate the impact on parents' wellbeing and sense of preparedness to become parents during a time of global pandemic with all the uncertainties it brings about. For some parents these measures caused exceptional distress, for example in the case of one expectant mother reported during the course of the review process for whom a concerning abnormality displayed on a routine scan led to the woman being left alone for over an hour while a consultant was sought to provide a second opinion.

The key concerns raised by the reported higher levels of parental (especially mother) anxiety and isolation during a time of lockdown, is the possible impact in interrupting the

development of attachment relationships and bonding between babies and new parents. If the emotional and psychological wellbeing of the infant's primary caregiver is compromised this could interrupt the forming of healthy attachments necessary for long term social and emotional development. While the evidence is not available as to the extent by which early attachments have been affected, given that stress, anxiety and depression are known influencers on parental good mental health, there is cause for concern regarding the longer-term impacts. This is especially in the case with respects to the children of families that arrive on the island with very little financial resources and limited social networks. Reports from the Children's Commissioner suggest there is a potential gap in the recording of children that arrive on or who are born on the island for whom there is no record until children are school aged or seeking a school place. In reflecting a hidden section of society, we were unable to solicit the experiences of parents of infants and young children from these groups.

For toddlers and young children known to Jersey, the concerns brought about during lockdown conferred to children's emerging social and personal development. Parents canvassed both through the scrutiny review and the Government's own reporting channels indicated a common a belief that young children's emotional wellbeing has been much worse affected than adults. One parent confided in their health visitor that their toddler aged child had developed a 'stranger danger' aversion to grandparents following the period of lockdown, while another mother reported that her small son wanted to hold onto her hand 'every time another person is walking towards them' even when he was in the pushchair. Such reports are highly indicative of the emotional penalties of the stay-at-home order on young children and babies, for whom the period represents a far greater proportion of their overall life experience and sets a precedence for their expectations and interactions with others in future relationship building.

The lack of resources and support structures put in place for new parents and parents of young children at the outset of the pandemic do suggest perhaps an initial oversight of the impact of COVID-19 measures upon the social and emotional development of young children, while the closure of parks, recreations and leisure spaces also highlights the physical and learning opportunities lost during this time. Early Childhood experts on the island have called for the 'the importance of making high quality support for families and children integral to Jersey's recovery plans, and ensuring that those families who are most at risk can sustain safe, stable and nurturing relationships' (Best Start Partnership 2020 p14)

### ***Polarisation in children's experiences during lockdown between advantaged and disadvantaged families***

The submissions we received and focus groups conducted as part of the scrutiny review highlighted something of a key distinction in the experiences of lockdown between families in different circumstances. On the one hand some families identified unique advantages, most notably due to the opportunity to spend more good quality time together with both parents and with children;

*"I've LOVED having my husband working from home as it's been so lovely to have lunch together and we get some time back by having no time out commuting."*

(Mother of three children, Best Start Partnership 2020)

Of course, the advantages experienced by children within two parent families must be set aside the additional challenges and loss experienced by children within single parent families, as well as those in care settings, for whom valued members may not reside within the same household, and from whom some children will have had experienced a separation. Furthermore, a prominent issue raised through submissions was that mothers were invariably more impacted than fathers in having to take on increased work and caring demands. This indicates that benefits that may accrue in some families from having two parents to share the load of domestic and childcare/ home-learning duties, must be considered against those families for whom mothers may have felt under increased pressure and strain, in having a knock-on impact upon children's experience of the environment of the home (e.g. as a tranquil or stressful setting).

Another factor that came through the submissions repeatedly was the impact of either having or lacking access to personal outside space during the stay-at-home order, especially in view of the excellent weather reported by parents and children. One mother spoke of the learning and wellbeing affordances enabled through having a garden through the lockdown period:

*"The other lovely thing is that the children have had the chance to spend lots of time in the garden and have seen their many seeds and plants develop, and pick and eat their own tomatoes, courgettes, sugar snaps, strawberries, broad beans, potatoes, spinach and mint..."*

(mother of three, Best Start Partnership, 2020)

Such comments were also echoed by children. On the one hand those that had access to outside space spoke positively about the ability to spend time in the garden. For example, when asked to select an emoji to reflect their experiences of lockdown one young child selected a happy smiley face with while another selected a smiley face with sunglasses. In justifying their choice, they explained:

*"Sunglasses, it was sunny, could play outside"*

(4insight focus group research, 3-year-old child)

*"Smiley, it was very hot outside, lots of fun"*

(4insight focus group research, 4-year-old child)

On the other hand, we know that children from lower income households have less adequate housing, often in overcrowded homes with a lack of quiet spaces to study, which was supported by comments from children and families in focus groups, who lamented their lack of access to inside and outside spaces;

*"It was bad. I really wanted to go outside to play"*

(4insight focus group research, 6-year-old child)

These accounts may shed some light on the children’s wellbeing data gathered by Jersey Child Care Trust, who noted a distinct polarisation in their findings in comparison with the previous year’s data. Fiona Vacher, the Executive Director for the charity commented on these findings:

*“The distinct difference in the data between the two cohorts clearly shows a divide between them with those who had experienced lockdown displaying either very good or very concerning scores.”*

In reflecting on the evidence collected as part of the scrutiny review, we believe that there is good reason to concur with JCCT’s reflections:

*“We believe that this mirrors the national and international emerging evidence showing the divide in society between those that have thrived during lockdown and those who clearly have not.”*

*(ibid)*

The marked differences between how children and families may have experienced the stay-at-home order is important to recognise because of the risk of the Jersey Government and Islanders more generally, conflating children’s experiences as being generalised or universal. We believe it is important to draw attention to the polarisation between children’s experiences of and facility to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, in urging Jersey Government not to overlook the impacts upon the least advantaged children.

### ***Overlooking young islanders studying at university overseas***

There is evidence to suggest that Jersey young people living overseas (largely in the UK) were overlooked in the planning and action during the pandemic. In March 2020 the Children’s Commissioner wrote to the Government seeking clarity about how Jersey young people studying at university in the UK would return home, and what thought had been given to them in planning. The island-based higher education advocacy group, *Student Funding Group*, were also seeking support for students overseas but there appeared a chronic lack of communication, which left their calls unanswered. It is unclear why they did not receive responses to their questions about delays to student funding, how students were being incorporated into plans around testing/vaccine deployment, as well as mental health support. At the outset of the pandemic, there was no mental health support for university students returning to Jersey from the UK, which the *Student Funding Group* campaigned for. Given that research shows that university students increasingly suffer mental health problems, especially amongst international students (due to lack of family/social supports in host country), this is a significant possible oversight. Jersey students studying in universities within the UK may not necessarily have had the social ties and family connections within the UK to provide much needed emotional/psychological support.

*‘Main challenge was meeting new people in Leeds, I was lucky some of my Jersey friends are also here so I wasn’t alone, if you didn’t know anyone it would be tough.’*



(4Insight Focus group research, university student aged 19)

It would have been especially testing for those in their first year of university who may not have established strong peer group networks at university yet - as UK students travelled to their family/guardian homes, many Jersey students who could not afford or were travel restricted would have been left on their own. The *Student Funding Group* also raised concerns about the unexpected expense of COVID-19 testing for students travelling home, the cost of unexpected travel, as well as the cost of accommodation they are committed to in the UK. This is likely to have especially hit the poorest students, and particularly at a time when the income from part-time work would have been restricted given closure of retail/hospitality - sectors students are more likely to work. Indeed, students are increasingly dependent on part-time paid employment to fund their studies as the cost of student accommodation and tuition fees have risen year-on-year. It is not clear the extent to which the Jersey Government recognised the plight of this group of young people, nor is it clear why there was a reported lack of communication about planning.

### **June 2020 – September 2020**

On 12<sup>th</sup> June 2020 the stay-at-home order was lifted and replaced with a soft opening, whereby normal activities were expected to resume, while maintaining physical distancing measures to reduce the possibility of COVID-19 transmission. Schools and school nurseries reopened on 22<sup>nd</sup> June at which point a staggered return to school was introduced, prioritising children in transitional years 6 and 10 and 12, with other year groups returning soon after. A 'recovery curriculum' was developed and introduced to schools, primarily to support children's transition back to school. Stringent measures were introduced to ensure the safety of schools and nurseries, to limit physical interaction between staff and children, including the formation of children within schools and nurseries into 'bubbles' of up to 8 children and identified staff members, who would not mix or interact with other 'bubbles' during school and nursery time. The physical layout of learning spaces was instructed to be adjusted to accommodate 2 meters distance between children and using tape to demarcate uni-directional pathways across the educational setting. Given the time of the year the ventilation of all public spaces was advised, this was accompanied by guidance underlying the importance of rigorous hygiene measures. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was made available to all staff. Borders were opened on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020. The summer term lasted just over three weeks, closing on July 16<sup>th</sup>, at the official time point in which schools 'break up' for summer holidays, which lasted until 2<sup>nd</sup> September, at which point all schools resumed as planned for the start of the Autumn term 2020.

In response to the emerging data on COVID-19 and guidance from the Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell (STAC), the decision made by the Jersey Government to re-open all schools and nurseries reflected the judgement that the risks to children's development, welfare and wellbeing were greater in being away from school than the health risks of transmission of the virus through attending. This was also a conclusion reached by many Governments around the world at the time. Accordingly, the Jersey Government took the steps to reopen schools in June and to the credit of both government and all those working and leading schools and

nurseries in Jersey, have remained open for all children to date. In showing a keen awareness for the importance of supporting children in the transition years those at a crucial point in between key stages were prioritised in the return to school. Given what we now know concerning the risks of the virus itself to children's health (which is very low) set against the evidence demonstrating the social, emotional risks of lockdown, on top of the loss of learning, and increased strain on households, including submitted evidence reporting the increase of domestic abuse, this response is to be commended. Notwithstanding the significant challenges and political pressure that emerged later in the year, the submitted evidence by children and families reflects an overwhelming collective relief at the end of lock-down and the return to school and nursery of children and young people.

### ***Responding to the transitional challenges of a return to nursery***

The return to school and nursery was not without challenges. Childcare and education support agencies reported an initial reluctance in some parents to return their children to nursery and pre-school, concerns that eased in later weeks. At this time support agencies acknowledged gratitude for the 'close communication with the Government Department, Childcare and Early Years' Service (CEYS)' as well as the collaborative effort made amongst professionals (JCCT, CEYS, Childcare Providers, Early Years Inclusion Team and others) to ensure that those children who needed to access their settings could do so. Regular communication at weekly intervals between government departments (including CEYS and Children, Young People, Education and Skills (CYPES)) and early years providers appeared to enable an agile responsiveness with regards to adjusting measures introduced to reduce transmission. For example, a meeting with the Director of the Jersey Child Care Trust reported nursery school leaders' distress at witnessing children struggling with guidance that had been provided for their protection and learning:

*"Staff seeing young children trying to negotiate seeing their friends and teachers on zoom was very emotional. They also spoke of how upsetting it was to watch children trying to get through gaps in barriers placed to separate bubbles of children to get to their friends."*

*(Fiona Vacher Executive Director Jersey Child Care Trust)*

It was therefore commendable that nursery leaders were granted the freedom to revise guidance in order to better meet children's developmental needs. For example, in dropping the requirement for nursery aged children to form 'bubbles' following reports from the leaders of Early years providers that such measures were not feasible and interrupted the interactions that children require for their social development and wellbeing (see developmental section *Children in the early years*). Furthermore, while advice to stop sharing toys and other physical objects seemed proportionate at the time, given what was thought to be a high-risk of transmission through surfaces (though it later transpired that this was much less risky than first thought) granting nurseries with the freedom to waive such rules in the case where children's object served as a 'transitional object' as a form of security that enables children to more easily transition from home to the nursery, showed a keen awareness for the importance of children's development of early attachments. Age appropriate guidance was given to early years settings as to how to uphold strict personal

hygiene measures, - such as a 'snuffle station',- in a way that was accessible to children, and showed good recognition for the role of play in learning for children in the early years.

Officials working in government departments focussed on early childhood demonstrated a keen awareness of the importance of educator facial visibility for communication and language development and collaborated with Health officials and school and nursery leaders to ensure that clear transparent visors were available for teachers and nursery nurses in place of the standard masks that cover the mouth. Quite rightly it was also acknowledged that teachers must have personal choice to determine which PPE they used, given that their personal circumstances may reflect a widely different level of anticipated risk.

Notwithstanding such responsiveness to adapt guidance on managing transmission risk, it was on return to nursery settings following lockdown that the social and emotional challenges of lock-down became evident. Reporting evidence disclosed parental reports of increased separation anxiety based on leaving their child at the nursery on return from lockdown, where children felt distressed upon being dropped-off by their parents. One parent reported concerns for children's social development in response to their child who had previously named their dolls and teddies after the names of children in the nursery, subsequently reverting to calling them 'doll' and 'teddy'. More generally, parents reported challenges to children's personal development in that the isolation from peers had interrupted the development of key social skills such as learning to share and turn-take. Other parents noted their concern for their children having become overly preoccupied with handwashing. Such reports indicate the importance of a keen sensitivity for how the effects of the pandemic and response measures may have long-term impacts and underline the need for vigilance by families, educators and health professionals, in order to ensure that childhood anxieties that may have been initiated through the pandemic do not lead on to more entrenched mental health difficulties or wellbeing concerns.

### ***Children's response to measures to prevent transmission of the virus, on return to school***

The advice given to schools about how to organise the school setting upon children's return seems proportionate and balances well the risks versus children's needs. For example, the decision to keep children in bubbles is a pragmatic approach to keeping school functioning as normal but also providing a level of protection against transmission. However, it was evident from children's responses to the focus groups and through submissions, that the communication could have been clearer to explain the rationale behind the protective measures. Children and young people consulted expressed dismay at the impact of 'bubble' grouping in the case where assignment to different bubbles preventing them from mixing with their friends during school:

*"I can't play with kids in other classes, can't pop their bubble."*

(4insight focus group research 10-year-old child)

Furthermore, the effectiveness of the measure was questioned by older children who expressed confusion toward the bubble rule as they would, "all be in the school corridors at the same time anyway" (ibid), while children of all ages reported being perplexed at being

given permission to mix with children within their bubble during the school day, but not able to mix with those same children out of school hours. This feedback indicates that while well intentioned, COVID-19 transmission prevention methods may have been better received by school children should they have had the clear channels of communication available to understand the reasoning behind the measures introduced and ample opportunity to ask questions about them. Jersey appears to have an active youth council strategy employed in most schools, there was possibly an opportunity missed not to utilise such resources as a communication channel to perform this function.

The initial advice given in June 2020 that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was not needed in schools (including the wearing of face masks) carried both risks and benefits. It is acknowledged that masks are important in halting the spread of the disease (though this was less widely acknowledged at the time) but equally masks can be disruptive to children's educational and social development so also carry risks in this regard. There were also significant PPE shortages at the time and a need to prioritise PPE for health care settings. Given this, it would seem that the advice was appropriate at the time, and in view of the fact that there was an emphasis on social dimensions of schooling. However, notwithstanding the freedom for children not to wear masks on their return to school following the first lock-down, there was evidence to suggest that children felt some discomfort at their teachers wearing masks:

*"They hate school, hate the masks, they say 'mummy, I don't like the teachers wearing them like being in hospital, you can't see their smiles'."*

(4insight focus group research, Parent of a primary school aged child)

*"They hated the measures, hated the masks. They don't have to wear them but don't want teachers wearing them. It's like a hospital. I now go out my way to smile with my eyes."*

(4insight focus group research, schoolteacher)

While teachers had evidently made efforts to counter the communication barrier created from mask-wearing, again better communication between Jersey Government and children and young people on the island, may have provided a vital context to mask-wearing in providing some reassurance to children.

### ***Efforts to support children's wellbeing 'recovery' in the return to school***

Findings reported of children's experiences of COVID-19 in the UK during lock-down point to the social and emotional impacts of separation from friends, peers, family and community (Green et al, 2020). Furthermore, in a recent study carried out by psychologists at Oxford University, they found that it was primary aged children who suffered the most in terms of their social and emotional wellbeing as a result of school closures (Pearcey et al 2020). Whilst the research was limited to the UK context, it underlines the importance of schools especially for the youngest children in society, who are at critical life stages in their development as learners and social beings. Jersey's acknowledgement of this through their provision of a 'recovery curriculum' is to be applauded (figure 1).

Figure 1: Jersey's 'recovery curriculum'

therapeutic support with professionals and with art therapy
walking social bonding
before catch-up and transitional work
working with parents
wellbeing walks
expert panel
children's day (3 <sup>rd</sup> July)
nurture groups

There was a very good balance and range of activities which were mostly focussed on social and emotional aspects (rather than learning) which is recognising the major impact of school closure. Whilst learning was to some extent mitigated through online teaching, it was the pastoral dimension, which was difficult to replicate in a virtual school. The recovery curriculum was the right approach to be taking at the time, to recognise how being out of school affected children's relationships, emotional/mental wellbeing, sense of self, and learner identity. The 'wellbeing walks' and 'walking social bonding' struck the right balance between keeping people safe (COVID transmission outside is far less likely) but also helping children to assimilate into their friendship groups again, re-renew friendships and in some cases re-learn to be around others. It would have been especially vital for children at the key transitional phases of education (for example, those in their first year of primary or secondary) whose friendships might be the most fragile and at early embryonic stages.

It was therefore interesting that meetings with Education officials reflected that schools reported to them that 'children didn't really seem to need' the recovery curriculum, which sheds light on the points raised previously about the polarisation in children's experiences of lockdown. It is notable that children did not refer to the recovery curriculum within focus groups, therefore we cannot assume that the curriculum was comprehensively followed in all schools. Comments from submissions, however, did paint a different picture of the need for the need for a wellbeing focused curriculum in school:

*"[My child was] frightened by the negative language used to refer to return to school measures- reading recovery, recovery curriculum, catch up, a generation lost ect"*

(4insight focus group research, Mother of a 7-year-old)

This indicates that some children at least felt very anxious about the return to school and the assumed detrimental impact of the pandemic of children's imagined futures. As well as highlighting the need to couch and explain support measures introduced in order to ensure that children understand their intention positively, this comment also alludes to a section of Jersey children who may well have been very much in need of such measures, but perhaps easier to overlook by schools and the Government.

Another group identified through the submission as overlooked in the Jersey Government's response to the 'soft opening' phase was that of home-schooled children. On the one hand, submissions indicated that this group of children fared in general very well through the stay-

at-home order, given that families were already set up to support home-learning. Children's dismay was noted, however, concerning the opportunity for school children to meet with their friends again on the return to school, while a similar opportunity to form 'bubbles' for learning was not made available for children in this group. It is our recommendation that Jersey Government could benefit from closer connections with Jersey Home Education Group, not only in consulting on the impact of COVID-19 response measures on the learning and wellbeing of children who are home-schooled, but also in learning from the network's more considerable experiences of supporting home learning, in the case of future school closures.

### ***Efforts to support children's educational recovery following lockdown***

While the curriculum developed to support the social and emotional impacts of lockdown was good, submissions indicated that less thought had been given by the Government to the educational impacts of the stay-at-home order. A leading educational charity on the island queried why no educational attainment data had been released to the public to enable identification and targeting of any gaps identified for groups of children whose learning had been particularly effected. In lieu of Jersey data it can be helpful to consider evidence from the UK which has indicated a "large and concerning attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils" (Education Endowment Foundation 2021) of around seven months. The same study highlighted that primary school children have been identified as those most affected by lockdown in the areas of reading and maths. Given that in Jersey, the pre-Covid gap between Jersey Premium children was reported to be around 20% it is concerning that there appears to be something of a lacklustre approach to addressing this gap, in terms of learning recovery plans. This is especially surprising given that such an ambition fits squarely with the Government's stated commitments to children in the 2018-22 Common Strategic Policy: *"achieving the aspiration of equity and fairness for the most vulnerable children"*. The same educational charity that funded and distributed digital devices to children, queried whether the concerted efforts required to manage the operational challenges of returning to school may have detracted attention from the development of centrally funded school-based interventions and support mechanisms to ensure children do not fall behind. They observed that while an agile response from the Health Department was evident in the deploying resources to address the issues COVID-19 presented *"there was little indication that officials in education were either similarly empowered or sought that empowerment"*. There are therefore questions on the readiness and speed of response and on the championing of education within the government structures. Indeed, both young people and parents acknowledged concern that the educational deficits children experience during lockdown had not been addressed following a return to school, with concern for the impact on future plans:

*"I can't catch up, nothing makes sense, I'm getting an apprenticeship, it's for 4 years, you need 5 grades 4 and above, including maths, English, I'm failing maths so I might have to do night school and do it again."*

*(4insight focus group research, 16-year-old)*

*"My daughter has tonnes of work, year 13 now, one teacher she can't get along with, just couldn't get help, screaming and shouting, slamming doors, first lockdown"*



*horrendous, school point horrendous geared up for exams. Don't know if she's going to pass or not, they changed teachers around."*

(4insight focus group research, Mum, of 18- & 24-year-old, self-employed)

Given that children had only three weeks at school following return from lockdown, we were surprised at the lack of educational resources apparent to support children's core skills in literacy and numeracy through the summer holidays. The easing of physical distancing restrictions underpinning the 'soft opening' strategy offered an ideal opportunity for educational intervention, especially considering the seasonal conditions which would have lent to outdoor grouping arrangements that could have offset any viral transmission concerns. We learned through the submissions provided, that again it was the proactive educational charity Every Child Our Future (ECOF) who were leading the way in terms of targeted summer learning plans. From May 2020, ECOF started publicising its proposed summer literacy and numeracy intervention programme in funding a specialist Reading Recovery teacher and in providing volunteers to support reading. These plans were shared with the Government department CYPES, as well as through direct approach to nine schools who had been targeted as serving those catchment areas where there is a high proportion of Jersey premium, EAL learners, and children from disadvantaged backgrounds and for whom may most be able to benefit. Despite the charity's best efforts to engage schools only two primary schools and later one secondary school came onboard to support the programme. Schools' reluctance to take up this offer was surprising and in view of this we were concerned as to why the CYPES team had not taken a more proactive stance in encouraging more of the target schools to get involved.

Notwithstanding the challenge of recruitment, it is commendable that as a result of these programmes, 273 children in target catchment areas were able to benefit from catch-up support from teachers and teaching assistants in small groups and were involved in a number of enrichment activities. Alongside progress on academic competencies, including the fundamentals of literacy and numeracy, the 2-to-4-week engagement was reported to contribute to improvements in physical and mental wellbeing and to social and emotional development.

### **September 2020 – December 2020**

On 2nd September 2020 schools re-opened for the Autumn term, in line with previous school years. Half term commenced on 26th October for a week, coinciding with a sharp rise in cases in November. On the 9th November the Minister for Children and Housing, Senator Mezec, resigned, citing a vote of no confidence in the leadership of the Chief Minister and the Jersey Government having 'fallen short on the commitments we made in the Common Strategic Policy to 'Reduce Income Inequality'.<sup>5</sup> He further cited civil servant obstruction to Social Housing reforms. Senator Mezec's successor, Deputy Macon was appointed Minister for Children and Housing (as it was at that time) on 17th November. A second lockdown was issued on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, alongside a hospitality circuit breaker, which instigated the closure

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<sup>5</sup> Senator Sam Mezec's resignation letter:

<https://www.reformjersey.je/Pages/BlogPost/fcedbc5a-30db-4095-8f6b-774efe6e9d7a25>

of hospitality venues such as restaurants and pubs for all dining with the exception of providing a takeaway service. Education officials reported declining numbers of attendance in the final weeks of December reflecting parental (and child) anxiety about the safety of children attending school at a time of high cases of COVID-19 on the island. Schools remained open throughout the whole of the Autumn term, with the term ending as planned on the 21st December 2020.

### ***Delayed action on the educational tutoring programme***

The tutoring programme - which involved children receiving one-to-one/small group support from a teacher - received significant praise from third-sector organisations, schools and parents. There is strong evidence internationally that individual and small group tutoring can have a significant effect on improving the learning outcomes of disadvantaged groups and narrowing attainment gaps. The introduction of this programme was highly appropriate, and we think is a key cornerstone in the Government's response so far.

But there is a question here about why it took so long to be implemented - the programme began in late Autumn, which is 8-9 months after the disruption and harm to children's education began. Research shows that gaps in attainment that occur early in a young person's life are likely to remain and become entrenched as they progress through their educational careers. The 8-9 month wait for children to receive tutoring is likely to have meant gaps in achievement were created that will now be long-standing - which would have been preventable had the Government reacted more quickly, as other Governments did around the world. The former education minister told us that the business case for a tutoring programme, along with other necessary education expenditure was submitted in May 2020, but it was only approved 6 months later in November. The question remains why it took so long to be approved with all of the consequential impacts on children's education.

There are also broader questions about access and monitoring of effectiveness around the tutoring programme, given that it represents a significant investment and is a cornerstone in the Government's educational response so far. We asked education officials for further data on take-up of the tutoring programme and a breakdown of the social background of those children receiving this crucial post-COVID educational support. The department is working to collect this detailed breakdown of what proportion of children from disadvantaged backgrounds have benefited from tutoring so far, but they were able to provide a breakdown of recipients by school. These data show that overall, across all schools, 23% of children have so far benefited from the scheme. But this is not evenly spread across all schools - and whilst there has been high take-up so far in some schools with the most disadvantaged catchments (e.g., 39% at Rouge Bouillon; 70% at First Tower), there are other schools with disadvantaged catchments that are below the island's average take-up (e.g., 11% at Samarès; 20% at St Luke). The 11% take-up at Samarès is surprising given that 39% of pupils at this school receive the Jersey Premium, 30% of pupils have English as an Additional Language (EAL) and 25% have Special Educational Needs (SEN). St. Lukes has a similarly disadvantaged intake, which doesn't quite match on to its relatively low take-up. At the same time, there are two schools which rank the lowest in terms of their disadvantaged pupils on roll, but yet have relatively high take-up of the tutoring programme (30% at Les Landes and 18% at Mont Nicolle).

We understand that teachers are able to use their discretion to identify those children needing the tutoring programme which could explain some of these disparities. But it is important to monitor who received the tutoring programme, and what proportion of EAL speakers (who will not always speak, hear or see English at home) and the poorest children (who are most likely to have lost out from online learning) take up this support – given these groups, relative to all children on the island, have been put at the greatest risk of falling behind by the pandemic.

### ***Lack of understanding about the plight of marginalised groups***

An issue that came up time and again throughout submissions and our conversations with third-sector, Government and (former) Ministers, was an apparent lack of awareness and understanding about the lives of the most marginalised on the island. It seemed that the Government was not tuned-in to what life was like for these groups, their day-to-day lived realities, and how a shock like COVID and lockdown would likely affect them. One of the Government officers we spoke with said that ‘Jersey is the worst place in the world to be poor’ and that there is a culture of believing responsibility for children only lies with the parent who should be responsible for providing the multiple computing devices needed for learning in a large family household; this assumption and culture would be a reasonable one to make if the island had full employment (paying a living wage), an affordable standard of living for all and if all parents placed equally high value on the importance of education. But as this is not the case for Jersey, where there is a sharp polarisation of wealth, it is a highly problematic assumption and culture to maintain. We were alarmed to also hear the apparent acceptance of this culture as the long-standing status quo, or as many people we spoke to described, the ‘Jersey way’. This culture within Government does help to explain some of the delays, inaction, and lack of adequate response we have found evidence of.

This culture would also help to explain why there does not seem to have been adequate attention given to the most marginalised pockets of Jersey society for example, children, for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL), and for whom school is often the only place they hear, speak and write through the medium of English. Another key marginalised group are families in poverty (many of whom will also not have English as their first language). Data from 2015 showed that more than a quarter (29%) of children were living in relative low-income households. The Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle Survey Report revealed that 1 in 7 households were materially deprived, with 1 in 10 households in severe material deprivation. While around 25% of households had difficulty coping financially, this rose to 44% of single parent families and 23% of households with children that had gone without new clothing for their child over the last year<sup>6</sup>. Whilst the tutoring programme would have mitigated some of the educational challenges faced by those in poverty (assuming they fully accessed the initiative), it was predicated on the assumption that participants were sufficiently motivated, prepared, and healthy to make the most of the opportunity. For those facing severe material deprivation, a lack of quality housing, poor nutrition, and stress/anxiety at home (all worsened by the pandemic) make them ill-prepared to fully engage with education initiatives like tutoring. Indeed, a host of research shows how factors associated with poverty (like not

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<sup>6</sup> Jersey Household Income Distribution (2014/15), Statistics Jersey  
Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle Survey Report (2017), Statistics Jersey

having a good quality breakfast to start the day) all make children ill-equipped to focus and concentrate on their learning. Whilst initiatives like the recovery curriculum and tutoring programme will provide benefits universally to all children, we could not see much evidence of any targeted initiatives specifically addressing the needs of the marginalised pockets of Jersey society, like EAL children and those facing severe material deprivation.

Initiatives like the tutoring programme would be more impactful if they were implemented alongside a programme of social and economic measures outside of schooling. Indeed, we concurred with the point made by the Children's Child Care Trust that interventions in response to the pandemic were largely school-based - but if children are not prepared well outside of school, there is a question about the likely success of such education interventions. The education interventions (such as the Recovery Curriculum) stand a far better chance of success for those children who have the best quality housing, nutrition, with parents who value education and provide the kind of home life that is conducive to success at school. This comes back to the point about awareness of the lives of marginalised groups. In developing initiatives like Recovery Curriculum and tutoring, there did not seem to be much thought given to children's different starting points and lived realities which are critical to their participation and success.

### ***Housing for children from low-income families***

A secure and stable home is crucial if children are to thrive in terms of their wellbeing, mental health and education. Over-crowded and poor-quality housing can contribute to poor wellbeing, stress and mental health problems as well as making it impossible for children to have an appropriate space to concentrate on their schoolwork. Whilst children from affluent homes may have their own dedicated, quiet workspace with enough space to comfortably do their schoolwork, children from poorer families in over-crowded homes will often be working with their siblings around a cramped kitchen table. This makes for a very unequal learning experience and is one of the reasons why it was so important that children returned to the school classroom, as happened rapidly in the case of Jersey.

But we were concerned to hear that the ban on evictions was lifted in the Autumn, potentially allowing evictions to take place from this point onwards. This left open the possibility that children and young people from low-income households, whose parents may have lost their jobs (especially given they are more likely to be working in hospitality/tourism), could have faced the situation of having to be evicted from their homes at the worst possible time. Given the context of Jersey, where housing is expensive and limited in supply, especially for unqualified housing, this represented a major risk to children and young people - posing considerable potential for harm to their wellbeing and development. It is hard to understand why this was deemed an appropriate decision. On one level, it could have been that the needs of landlords were prioritised over tenants - but it must be recognised that children will inevitably be caught up in this - and the question is whether their needs were properly respected here by the Government in taking this course of action.

## ***Public perception that young people were unfairly scapegoated as the cause for the autumn spike in cases***

On the 6th November 2020, the Chief Minister issued a statement to Jersey reporting on a spike in new cases of the virus and imploring to islanders to “*change our behaviour*”<sup>7</sup> and that “*following the summer,...many Islanders have become far too relaxed in their compliance with public health guidance.*” (ibid) In accounting for this rise in cases the Chief Minister was careful to avoid placing blame upon the tourism industry which had resumed following the opening of borders; “*which due to our travel restrictions are getting smaller and smaller*” (ibid) and firmly placing the responsibility upon islanders themselves; “*mainly now Islanders returning home*” (ibid). The Chief Minister went on to point more squarely at young people as being the cause of the autumn spike in cases:

*“Young people are having significant impact on the growing spread of COVID-19 within our community. We know through our interviews during the contact tracing process that physical contact between friends, between boyfriends and girlfriends, and the sharing of drinks and vapes, is leading to the spread of the virus among younger and asymptomatic carriers. We are now seeing cases that we can trace back to Halloween parties and this is particularly troubling, given the number of warnings we issued about keeping safe during that holiday.”*

(Chief Minister of Jersey, Senator John Le Fondré)

This statement and the Governmental assumptions that underpinned them were reported through submissions and focus group discussions as being deeply troubling and unfair by young people and parents in Jersey. The resounding belief echoed through feedback regarding the more general communications between Government and children and young people, was that too much of the blame was apportioned to children and young people, and the Ministerial address regarding the autumn spike was especially singled out as a key communication that young people pointed to. They felt that it was unreasonable that young people were apportioned so much blame - given their perspective that some licensed premises were failing to comply with regulations. Many felt that there were numerous causal factors underpinning the rising cases at the time, - including through tourism- and that it was “easy to blame and use teenagers as scapegoats” (4Insight Focus group research)

*“It was frustrating when you'd go for walks on the beach, and you'd see big groups of parents with toddlers. There's nothing to tell them off for gathering but had that been a group of teenagers there'd be an uproar. There were double standards. Young people were scapegoated.”*

(4Insight Focus group research, 21-year-old)

*“In my opinion, they didn't do amazing [in Government communications with young people]. We got the blame for a lot of stuff. No support for gyms or pubs whereas stuff for older people would have support.”*

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<sup>7</sup> Statement from the Chief Minister, 6th November 2020:  
<https://www.gov.je/News/2020/Pages/ChiefMinisterStatement6Nov.aspx>

(4Insight Focus group research 17 year old)

At a time of a global pandemic, we believe that it is essential that children and young people do not feel alienated by Government and that a more sensitive approach could have been taken to relay public health guidance in a way that includes and embraces the whole community. Furthermore, later comments made within the same statement seem to reflect an assumption of complacency among young people and an assumed lack of concern for their potential role in transmission of the virus:

*“Please think how devastating it would be for you, and your family, if you were to infect your grandmother or grandfather and, worse still, lead to their deaths”*

(Chief Minister,<sup>8</sup>)

These comments must be considered alongside evidence from the UK that one of the key primary concerns of children and young people over the course of the pandemic, has been the fear of spreading the virus to friends and family (DfE 2020, p118). The same concerns were reported by parents within multiple submissions, as well as by children and young people themselves through the focus groups. Indeed, the fear over inadvertent transmission of the virus between family members emerged as a key factor that has interrupted the re-bonding and reunion of children with grandparents and extended family members, despite restrictions on physical distancing having been lifted. Furthermore, it was apparent that concerns over asymptomatic transmission were not restricted to children but also extended to older people, whose perspectives arguably may have been disproportionately inflamed following this address:

*““Went to see mum and dad, they love them [their grand children] but just stood there they didn’t want to cuddle them.”*

(4insight focus group research, Parent of children aged 4, 6 & 8 years old).

Findings such as these point to the need for the reparation work needed between the different generations on the island and between Government and children and young people. Efforts to pursue relationship building and social cohesion on the island did not feature within discussions with officials in conversations regarding Jersey’s recovery plans. We would recommend that this issue be placed high on the agenda in future planning.

### ***An authoritarian approach to policing young people***

As further evidence to the suggestion that young people were unfairly victimised, we received a number of submissions from parents and young people voicing concern that they were disproportionately targeted by police when socialising with friends outside. One parent reported that their 15-year-old daughter had felt ‘intimidated’ after being approached by

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<sup>8</sup> Statement from the Chief Minister, 6th November 2020:  
<https://www.gov.je/News/2020/Pages/ChiefMinisterStatement6Nov.aspx>

police when socialising with friends at a time permitted, while other young people and parents made similar claims:

*“He’d go out for the 2 hours exercise, but friends would hover around so get told off by police, it was brutal, caged in for 22 hours.”*

(4insight focus group research, parent of a 15-year-old child)

The Children’s Commissioner has supported such concerns in raising questions regarding the arrest and detention of young people, in particular *‘the sharp rise in arrests made last year for what are termed ‘process offences’, which would include those related to breaking Covid restrictions*. She reported that 282 young people (aged 10 to 17 years old) were arrested by the Jersey police last year, in constituting a rise of more than 100% from the equivalent 2019 figure. She also voiced concern for the increasing number of cases of children being deprived of their liberty in circumstances where she believed *“detention has not been (as it should be) used as a measure of last resort”*. This included reports of a number of children being arrested as a result of breaches of COVID-19 emergency legislation. These statistics point to the need for a more thorough review of arrest and detention criteria and the circumstances under which they are levied at young people, so as to avoid any possible heavy-handed approach towards young people’s social behaviours and interactions in the community. Furthermore, it is essential to ensure that the treatment of young people in response to any ‘process’ or other offences is fully compliant with children’s rights as laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

### ***Compulsory mask-wearing for secondary school aged children***

While children were not required to wear masks on return to school in June, the rising number of cases of COVID-19 in November led to the introduction of mask wearing for some secondary school aged children in order to try to curtail the transmission of the virus in schools. Evidence indicating the potential physical discomforts involved with mask wearing including headaches, neck, head or ear pain, exercise facial temperature rises, (Ong et al 2020) as well as facial rash, irritation and itching (Hu et al. 2020) mean that caution should be exerted in the recommendation of mask wearing for children. However, the evidence is divided over the longer-term health concerns raised through prolonged mask-wearing. While one reputable review into the effects of mask-wearing in adults has concluded that; *‘overall, the virus reduction and therefore potentially life-saving benefits of wearing face masks seem to outweigh the discomforts’* (Scheid et al. 2020 p12) a more recent review of the evidence has raised a number of more concerning impacts such as respiratory impairment, a drop in oxygen and a rise in carbon dioxide levels (Kisielinski, et al 2021). Moreover, a recent randomised control trial (considered to be the gold standard scientific evaluation measure) exploring the impacts of mask wearing on children, found that the carbon dioxide level in mask wearing children- were three times the recommended limit, with younger children displaying the highest levels, concluding that *“ample evidence for adverse effects of [mask wearing]...suggest that children should not be forced to wear face masks”* (Walach et al 2021, pE2).



A further common argument for abstaining from mask-wearing concerns the potential psychological impacts, with a recent paper exploring the issue through the lens of the well-established psychological Self Determination Theory (Scheid et al. 2020). This paper explains that mask wearing could interfere with the three universal fundamental needs that we require for optimal wellbeing, autonomy, relatedness and competence. The authors observe that mandatory mask wearing can obstruct these needs through; firstly, diminishing the individual's choice (to wear or not wear the mask); secondly, it could impede one's sense of social relatedness, which connects to issues raised in obstructing communication and a sense of connection that the barrier of a mask introduces between people; and thirdly, in reducing a sense of competence, given the changing information available about whether to wear masks or not. Supporting Scheid et al.'s (2020) claims, a number of submissions and comments made by parents, children and teachers across the scrutiny review revealed mask-wearing to be a divisive issue, in reporting a psychological impact of mask wearing for some children. A number of submissions from parents highlighted their children's aversion to mask-wearing, whereas the focus group data revealed a mix of opinion on mask wearing in school-some children and young people accepted it as they had become accustomed to it, however others expressed a strong dislike for mask-wearing:

*"Our child was also highly anxious in seeing anyone in a face-mask and seeing anyone in a mask triggered a very strong fear response"*

(Parent of a 7-year-old child, submission)

*"Masks. It ruins the lesson. They come in, I ask them to put their mask on and they're immediately upset and don't want to be there."*

(4insight focus group research, Teacher)

Given the concerns raised by parents and the evidence on the impact of mask-wearing affecting language and communication in younger children (see *children in the early years* section) we agree with the Jersey Government's decision not to impose mandatory mask-wearing for children in primary schools. However, submissions indicated that the changing guidance on mask-wearing for secondary school aged children during the autumn term, while arguably justifiable on health grounds, could have been better communicated to staff and parents, with the opportunity for both parents and young people to further explore the emerging research evidence on the impacts of mask-wearing and in having the opportunity to make their own choices. A more open debate between Jersey experts and the schooling community may have offset concern regarding the 'competency' element of wellbeing that Scheid et al. (2020) refer to, through increasing public confidence in the changing guidance on this issue. One parent reported:

*"Regarding getting any information about the pandemic, the communication was shocking. I have contacted my headteacher asking who had done any risk assessment on children wearing masks all day, lack of oxygen to the developing brain, breathing back in your stale carbon dioxide? Apparently, he has to wait to get his instructions from STAC. I contacted education and the children's commissioner, but nobody could*

*help, I also contacted Ivan Muscat, and the chief minister, who didn't deem to reply, even though I chased them up to ask them to point me in the right direction if they weren't in charge! My daughter has a mask exemption, but she is too anxious to use it, she therefore wears a mask to and from school on the bus and all day at school, they even had to sit their mock exams wearing a mask. I really don't think that is acceptable"*

(Parent of a 15-year-old girl, submission).

### **January – present (July 2021)**

On the 10th of January 2021 Senator Vallois resigned as Minister for Education, citing a lack of confidence in the Chief Minister's decision for schools to reopen<sup>9</sup>. Schools subsequently did resume on the 11th January, only four days later than the original return date of 6th Jan. At this time the Island was still under its second lock-down, until 17th of February when a staggered opening was instigated. Close contact services resumed from 10th February and from 17th February 2021 Faith groups were issued the permission to meet for worship in groups of up to 40 people, and controlled outdoor sports gatherings had permission to restart for up to 35 young people. From 22nd February the hospitality circuit-breaker was eased with premises that serve food and drink enabled to open where they could maintain 2 metre distancing between people and a stipulated maximum number of people per table. On the 9th February the former recently appointed Minister for Children and Housing, Deputy Macon, was subsequently appointed Minister for Children and Education. Four months later Deputy Macron officially resigned from the post on 7th June, his duties having been removed from 24th March 2021. On the 2nd April, Easter holidays began for schools and ran until the 16th April. On the 12th April the second lockdown was fully lifted with the physical distance requirement being replaced with guidance. Deputy Scott Wickenden was appointed Minister for Children and Education on 29th June 2021, in assuming a new ministerial role. In the period between Deputy Macron's resignation and until Deputy Wickenden's appointment, the portfolio was held by the Chief Minister with delegated responsibility to the Assistant Ministers for Children and Education (previously Deputy Wickenden and Deputy Trevor Pointon). Schools remained open throughout 2021 from the 11th January to 15th July. Youth Projects also remained open through the second lockdown.

### ***Escalating waiting lists to access key therapeutic services***

A very concerning impact of the COVID-19 response reported through submissions both by parents and organisations that work with or for therapeutic services for children, has been the delays that have accrued in the waiting lists to access these vital services. Exactly one year ago from the time of writing this report, the Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy (S&LT) team submitted evidence voicing their concern that the 12-week pre-pandemic typical waiting time for a referral to the team had extended to 10 months following lockdown. On commenting of the likely impact of this extended delay, the team reported significant concern; *"[this] is a very long time in a young child's life and the concern is that some children will miss this vital window for language learning"*. (Best Start Partnership 2020)

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<sup>9</sup> See Senator Vallois' resignation letter here: [https://www.bailiwickexpress.com/jsy/news/education-minister-resigns/#.YPfwJeOo\\_OR](https://www.bailiwickexpress.com/jsy/news/education-minister-resigns/#.YPfwJeOo_OR)

In accounting for the delays in services there are two likely reasons. The first is that the demand for accessing these services is likely to have risen significantly following the stay-at-home order. As discussed previously (see *Child in the early years* development section) many young children will have been denied access to school and nursery-based speech and language support during lockdown, as well through as the daily events and experiences in the community that promote language development. Furthermore, parents' additional responsibilities and lack of immediate support coupled with possible wellbeing concerns on account of the pandemic, may well have compromised the time and facility primary care givers have to speak with, read to and support language development at home. The second reason that waiting lists may have increased so significantly, is the most concerning in relation to the Government of Jersey's response, which is that with the exception of urgent feeding and swallowing referrals, all other vital speech and language services were suspended at a time when they were in dire need. As the Jersey Speech and Language Team report:

*"When lockdown commenced, the Paediatric Speech and Language Therapy (S&LT) team initially continued to provide support to their clients and families through phone and video consultations. The team however were directed to cease business as usual in the middle of April, so the team could complete any necessary training and be ready for redeployment. 6 members of the team have completed the Health Care Assistant training and two members of the team were redeployed to other Departments. The S&LT team are currently awaiting confirmation from the Health and Community Services Executive Team regarding when business as usual can recommence...There are currently over 100 children waiting for an initial assessment. This increased waiting time has created anxiety and concern for families and the team. This will have a long-term impact on the already stretched resource allocated to the S&LT team"*

(Jersey's Children's Speech and Language Therapy Team, Best Partnership p16)

While services have now resumed, a year down the line from the publication of this report, the waiting list time has not been reduced to meet need, and concerningly has almost doubled within the timeframe. In our meeting with the Director of Jersey Child Care Trust who sits on the Best Partnership board, she advised us that:

*"For any child who is referred from January 2021 the waiting time for them to be seen will be around 18 months"*

(Fiona Vacher, Director JCCT)

Furthermore, other teams within the Jersey Government's specialist therapeutic services workforce that were identified through submissions as being either unable to provide their services to children, or who were re-deployed at the start of the pandemic included the Early Years Inclusion Team, Occupational Health, Physiotherapy and Audiology. In reflecting upon the impact of these shortages on children, a submission by the JCCT observed:

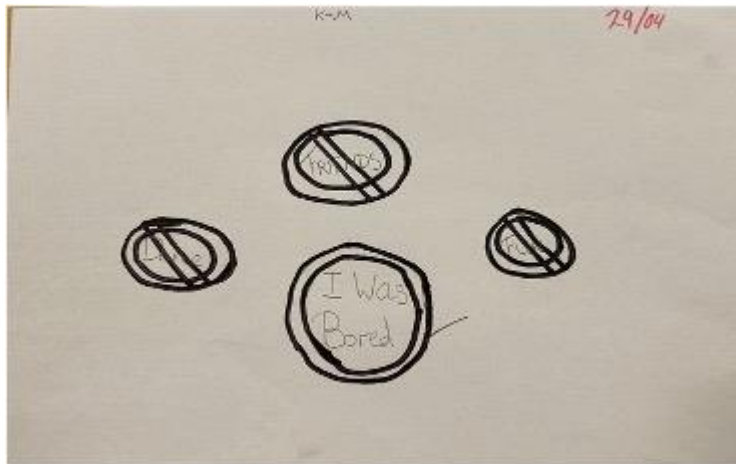
*"This [removal of services] continued for many months and has had a severe impact on those children who were previously accessing their services and the quality and value of our interventions that are usually informed by these professionals."*

Evidence shows us that children in poverty are far more likely to be affected by speech and language delays which affect up to 56% of children in some areas of social deprivation within the UK (Law and Rush 2011). A submission from a leading educational charity for children in Jersey (ECOF) warned that the ages of 4-8 in a child's life represent *'the last critical window of opportunity in which change is possible... the life chances of many young children have been put in jeopardy.'* Indeed, we know from the experts about the long-term penalties of early speech and language problems that are not addressed in a timely manner. These include poor outcomes in terms of; educational achievement, wellbeing and behaviour, and even employability and participation in society (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists 2014). This evidence underscores the vital importance of affording Jersey therapeutic services the sufficient resources to enable them to reduce such delays in accessing services as a matter of urgency. We were dismayed to discover that a number of officials interviewed through the scrutiny process were both unaware of these suspensions to vital services and the scale of delays that had occurred but were also sceptical of the factual basis upon which these claims were made. This suggests that a first step to tackling this issue is the development of more efficient communication channels between Government departments, third sector organisations that support children, and the on the ground therapeutic teams that deliver these essential services for children.

### ***Long term- impacts of COVID-19 response measures on friendship***

In reflecting upon the long-lasting impacts of COVID-19 upon children, the research evidence is clear that it is children's social and emotional wellbeing that has been most adversely affected. This finding came through strongly in evidence presented through submissions and within focus group discussions, which highlighted the multiplier effects of successive COVID-19 response implications upon children's abilities to socialise and connect with their friends and peers, including through; the stay-at-home order restricting contact with peers, social distancing regulations limiting social and leisure opportunities once initial restrictions had been lifted, the surveillance and young people's social interactions (see above) and the extended and multiple social isolations instigated through the most recent summer peak in new cases reported at the time of writing (July 2021). The social impacts of COVID-19 on their wellbeing were those most frequently raised by children of all ages. When asked what first words or associations come to mind when thinking about the impact of COVID, 'Impact on Socialising' and 'Lack of Social Interaction' emerged as key issues among 12-25 years olds in the focus group research. Younger children also voiced frustrated at the limitations to their social opportunities. For example, one 7-year-old child drew about how she was unable to see friends, dance or have fun, and that she was bored (see figure 1.)

**Figure 1. a 7-year-old child's visual depiction of the 'impact of COVID'**



Across the age spectrum young people lamented the long-term impact of the pandemic in halting or limiting their leisure pursuits, such as partaking in sports such as swimming, football, dance, rugby, or activities such as piano lessons and martial arts. Focus groups with children and parents conducted in April 2021 revealed that many of these activities still hadn't resumed following immediate closure over a year previously, and some parents shared concerns whether their children would want to return to them in the future, given that their confidence to participate in community life had been deeply affected:

*"Their exams were cancelled, [she] became reclusive, so hard to re-engage with school. She lost the ability to be social. February half term she dabbled in self-harm; it's been really hard."*

(4insight focus group research Parent of a child of unspecified age)

*"My daughter couldn't cope. She followed me around the house. She adores her friends, she couldn't cope. I see the implication of them not being at school for so long."*

(4insight focus group research Parent of a child of unspecified age)

*"I'm more irritated than I was last year, nothing to keep my mind sane, definitely boredom"*

(4insight focus group research Young person of unspecified age)

Previous sections of this report have identified the social concerns raised by parents and educators regarding the aversions and developmental impacts on very young children, issues that were also raised in focus groups concerning babies and infants being alarmed by other people. Children in middle childhood have also been reported to have struggled with the lack of social opportunities available, such as playgrounds and play areas that have remained closed off. Young people themselves have also raised additional concerns regarding missing out on social opportunities such as parties, relationships and key milestones such as the end of school prom and graduation.

With respects to young people, it is also relevant to consider the impact of such multiple barriers to children's socialisation as potentially damaging to children's emergent identities as individuals who separate from their families and forge connections and identifications in the community and society more widely (see adolescence development section of the report). Coupled with the perceived scapegoating of young people for the increase in transmission of the virus through the Government's communications (discussed previously), the lack of renewed opportunities for young people to reconnect with their peers, friends, and wider Jersey community, suggests the apparent fractures in Jersey society that urgently need addressing. It was evident through submission that Jersey young people were receptive to the effectiveness of ad hoc community actions in raising morale and in generating a sense of camaraderie and togetherness including:

- Meeting new people
- Connecting with the elderly
- Free postcards from the post office
- Rainbows on windows
- Clap for the NHS

(Source: Youthful Minds Young People Survey submission)

However, any attempt to restore children and young peoples' active participation within society, including social and leisure opportunities to connect with peers, must go beyond ad hoc measures in being rather at the heart of Government recovery plans.

## SECTION 3

### Evaluation of future plans

The Government of Jersey's future plans are examined here in relation to their appropriateness for addressing the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's development. We consider in particular the organisational structuring of Government and the representation of children's voice, long-term strategies to recover children's education and wellbeing as well as wider impacts on household finances and associated rates of child poverty.

#### *The voice of children and young people in Government*

There is evidence to suggest that the needs of children and young people were not always foregrounded as fully as they could have been through the pandemic. This seemed to have been hampered by a number of structural and organisational factors:

- The role of Children's Minister does not appear to be sufficiently embedded within Government or given the degree of status required for the appointed position to have sufficient influence on political and Government decision making.
  - The Children's Minister was not included in key decisions which would have had knock-on effects for children and young people. If the voice of children and young people is to be fully embedded across Government, the Children's Minister needs to join the core group of Ministers with cross-Government oversight - to ensure Children and young people are considered in decisions across all portfolios. We note that the current Minister for Children is also the Minister for Education and Deputy Chief Minister - which is welcomed - but this needs to be a permanent arrangement.
- Key Government committees relating to children and young people are tied to Ministers (rather than officer-led) - which means their operation and work is disrupted/halted when there are Ministerial changes.
  - The Corporate Parenting Board has not met since 5th June 2020. The aims of the board are to: 'provide political oversight on how the Government of Jersey is discharging its Corporate Parenting duties to Looked After Children and Care Leavers'. Furthermore, the states' intentions of the board are to: 'embody the 'Putting Children First' Pledge and more intuitively, it will ask the question "would this be good enough for my child?" in relation to aspiration, outcomes, policies and services.'
  - The Children's Strategic Partnership Board did not meet for over 6 months between September 2020 to April 2021. The board is intended to: 'support the Council of Ministers to set its vision for children in Jersey, ensuring strategic decisions are based on a collective understanding of policy and practice issues, including legislation'.

It is crucial that there are sustained organisational structures in place to ensure that children's developmental needs are always considered within any decision taken by Government. The



voice of children and young people's needs to be more firmly embedded across all Government portfolios going forward (housing, health, home affairs, social security) – and having cross-cutting committees and a senior Minister representing the voice of children across all Government portfolios is crucial.

### ***Lack of long-term strategic planning for post-COVID recovery***

Governments around the world have recognised the impact of COVID-19 on an entire generation of children and young people - alert to the specific COVID-related impacts on child development, achievement gaps, mental health, wellbeing, transitional and labour market entry inequalities, to name but a few. There is now long-term planning underway on how to address this disruption with the development of education recovery plans. In England, the Government have begun to plan an education recovery programme, with a series of announcements around specific long-term initiatives including a 'Recovery Premium' for schools (building on the Pupil Premium) to provide, summer schools, mental health training for staff, and a tutoring programme<sup>10</sup>. They are currently working on further recovery plans for the long term, having appointed a Recovery Commissioner, Sir Kevan Collins.

We were not able to identify any long-term strategies for recovery of children and young peoples' development in Jersey. The Children's Child Care trust were unaware of any such plans but noted their awareness of major plans for recovery of the economy. Education officials who we spoke to were not able to identify any long-term strategy in development - beyond what was already in place with the tutoring programme (although it is not clear how long the funding will last for). We were not able to locate any document or announcement from Ministers about developing such a strategy.

The disruption to delivery of therapeutic care has resulted in a large backlog of cases, with reports of some children waiting upwards of 18 months. We were not able to find any evidence of any substantial plans for considered investment that would substantially impact on addressing this large backlog.

Beyond education and schooling, there is also a need to think about the wider social, emotional and physical development of children and young people. A number of the officials and third sector organisations we spoke with highlighted significant disparities in access to outdoor spaces (including public spaces and private spaces) - with many of the poorest children living in crowded properties without a garden. Future planning needs to address this disparity and ensure all children have equal access to outdoor spaces and affordable leisure pursuits, including the ability to pursue sporting and active hobbies and interests, where finance is not a barrier. This is necessary to ensure children's full and healthy social, emotional and physical development.

### ***Recovering household finances of the poorest***

Household poverty significantly impacts on children and young people both directly (poor quality housing, lack of adequate resources for learning/development, poor nutrition) and

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-education-recovery-package-for-children-and-young-people>

indirectly (increased stress, crime, alcohol/substance addiction). It is reported that household finances have been significantly impacted by the pandemic which is likely to have resulted in higher levels of debt for the poorest in Jersey, who were already struggling to survive.

*'Many families in Jersey were already struggling to make ends meet due to low paid work, lack of affordable childcare and high living costs. Covid-19 has increased this stress considerably. When combined with unstable housing, food insecurity, social isolation and for some families, no access to government support, it would be of little surprise that the toxic overload of adversities has led to increasing rates of debt, domestic abuse, substance misuse and untreated mental health problems. We must not lose sight of the huge consequences of these threats to the health and development of our most vulnerable children and their families, now and for years to come.'*

(Submission by Brighter Futures)

This is borne out in the Government's own survey data which showed:

*During 2020 more than one third (36%) of households reported that their finances had deteriorated due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with half (50%) of the households in non-qualified rental accommodation reporting a deterioration in their household finances. Further, when asked, more than a quarter (27%) of households expected their financial situation to get worse over the next 12 months.*

(Children's Commissioner submission)

As noted by the commissioner, many low-income households dependent on the tourism sector will work in the summer to save enough money for when work dries up in the winter months. With tourism shut down in summer 2020, it is hard to see how many of the poorest families could have made it through the winter without getting into significant financial problems - likely made worse by the removal of bans on evictions in late 2020. We are not aware of any plans to help families with this likely huge debt burden, nor support to recover household finances of the poorest families - putting them in highly vulnerable positions going forward. It is especially concerning not to see support being planned for those unable to claim income support. This raises alarming concerns about the knock-on effects for children's nutrition, safety and wellbeing (with stress, anxiety and domestic violence connected to financial worries), housing and living situations (including over-crowding), and their general health in an island which charges for many healthcare services. It is well known that these lived experiences of poverty, what Brown (2014a) refers to as 'the binds of poverty', make it impossible for children to reach their potential in education and lead to many of the negative outcomes in later life. Developing a plan to support households recover their finances from

the economic hit of COVID will help to mitigate any knock-on effects for children's long-term development.

## SECTION 4

### Conclusion and recommendations

This review has highlighted the multiple and interconnected impacts of the pandemic and Jersey Government COVID-19 response measures upon children and young people of all ages. The scope of these impacts has extended from social and emotional wellbeing, physical and mental health, through to educational development and work chances, and for some, economic impacts to their families that compromise the basic material necessities for children's healthy development, welfare and participation in society. Furthermore, ample evidence shows that these impacts are not attached to singular measures or effects brought about by the pandemic, but rather stem from challenges brought about to one part of children's development that can be seen to have knock-on impacts onto other aspects of their development. By way of example, we can consider how families' economic circumstances can produce a barrier to accessing essential resources needed to support children's educational progression, which may go on to affect their future participation in society and chances of securing a secure income in the future. Alternatively, interruptions to children's social connection and development brought about through the various measures that have been an obstacle to children's participation in community life, can be seen to have led towards more entrenched challenges that threaten children's mental as well as physical health. This finding regarding the interconnection between developmental effects of COVID-19, is important to speak to the question of whether to single out or pursue children's recovery according to the separate domains of children's development (for example that may fall under the different ministries). In contrast, the deeply interconnected nature of the various impacts to children's education, health, housing and welfare highlights the need to address children's recovery to COVID-19 pandemic through a cooperative multi-agency and cross ministerial working approach.

Ostensibly, the Jersey Government have stated an explicit commitment to 'Putting Children First' however, the evidence gathered through this review has raised questions as to the extent to which this principle extends beyond the rhetoric, and indeed one official reflected in interview that the culture on Government reflected more of an assumption that "children should be seen and not heard". While such a view must also be set against the competing perspective that the tide is slowly changing in this regard, the evidence presented through this review add the appendage that such efforts have not been rapid enough to keep pace with the urgent and pressing challenges that have been brought about through the crisis of a global health pandemic. Of all the voices in this debate it is those of children and young people that should be listened too, and on this matter their position was clear that Government was not listening to their concerns, and when addressing the Government directly included the following comments on the Jersey response to COVID-19:

*"Be more consistent, and communicate better and explain the reasoning behind decisions"*

(4Insight young person on unidentified age)

*“[Stop] blaming young people for what they failed to prevent”*

(4Insight young person on unidentified age)

We have found evidence here that suggests the Jersey Government is not always fully cognisant of its role as a corporate parent, which is especially alarming in a society like Jersey which has severely impoverished pockets of society - where children's needs are not being met, and where the Government clearly need to play a role. This omission by the Jersey Government could be ideological or rest with the organisational culture of Government. It was evident, for example, from the fact that the Education officials had to make a 'case' for expenditure on vital resources (why was a case needed in the first place, wasn't there obvious need here?) which in the end took 6 months before funding was provided. Their omission was also clear from evidence of poor access to healthcare and therapeutic services (a key mandate of UNCRC), with an unacceptable waiting list for these services now having built up since the pandemic began. The lifting of the ban on evictions left open the possibility that children could face uprooting and significant stress at the worst possible time. The lack of adequate outdoor play areas and unaffordability of outdoor activities assumes that all children have either the funds or their own private outdoor areas at home - which is clearly not the case, with the poorest in over-crowded homes that have no garden suffering from this assumption. These are just some examples we have found of where the Government has fallen short of its responsibility to care for the needs and development of children and young people in Jersey.

There is now an unacceptable waiting list and backlog of cases for therapeutic care and mental health therapies for children and young people. These waiting lists are crucial to address because conditions can worsen or become deep-seated if they are not properly addressed from the outset. It is unacceptable that children should have to wait so long, having knock on effects for their wellbeing and development, including educational progression. Moreover, we found evidence which suggested that education itself is not prioritised in Government expenditure or given the same level of importance as other Government functions, especially economy and business. There is a need to properly fund education in the long term but also provide the necessary urgent funding to address the huge backlog of workload and need.

The pandemic brought communities together in many ways, but it also appears to have worsened intergenerational relations, bringing to the surface divisions between old and young. Young people were scapegoated and blamed for spikes in cases, through little to no fault of their own. They appear to have been harshly treated by the authorities for any divergence from the rules. Whilst people of all ages should follow the rules, there also needs to be recognition that socialising with their peers is vital for the social and emotional development of children and young people. Not providing this opportunity is just as much of a threat to their development - and greater acknowledgement was needed of this.

## Recommendations

The conclusions reached here point to 6 key recommendations for policy development on the island:

1. **Develop a comprehensive post-COVID-19 recovery strategy for children and young people** - which encompasses all key domains of their lives (e.g. education, social and emotional wellbeing, physical and mental health, economic security)
2. **Embed the voice of children and young people more within Government** (so that proper consideration is given to their situation at the outset of the policy making process).
3. **To urgently conduct a review to assess the barriers to children in poverty on the island** so the recovery strategy is evidence-based, ensuring children in poverty are able to fully recover, renew and be resilient to the lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. **To pursue an explicit commitment on behalf of Government to assume responsibility for their role as corporate parents**, to address the needs and rights of children in line with the UNCRC (it is not sufficient to rely on third sector organisations or philanthropists to fulfil this role)
5. **To ensure that Government departments serving children's needs are sufficiently resourced** in order to address the recovery of all Jersey children from the pandemic, to conduct a funding review, whereby budgetary allocations are more in line with those assigned to recovering the economy.
6. **Ensure societal divisions are healed by community building initiatives** - especially intergenerational divisions between old and young so that the benefits of engaged intergenerational communities can be realised.

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## 10. Appendix Two – 4insight Focus Groups Report



# COVID-19 Response: Impact on Children and Young People

Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

# Aim and Objectives

The research project **aim** was to provide information to help the Panel understand the impact that the response from the Government of Jersey has had on children and young people in the Island. This included the impact of school closures/lockdown/stay at home/work from home and the loss of the learning environment as well as the appropriateness, or not of the Government's decisions and actions taken that affect the broad spectrum of children and young people, (conception to age 25). The ethos, culture and processes within the other key decision making bodies in relation to children and their families were included too.

Specific objectives included assessing:

- The main challenges/negative experiences for children, young people and their families during the pandemic
- The main successes/positive experiences for children, young people and their families during the pandemic
- The impact of the stay at home order/working from home on children, young people and their families
- Whether the physical, emotional and mental wellbeing of children and young people has been at the heart of Government decision making in line with the priority to put children first
- What impact the response to the pandemic had on existing inequalities for children and young people plus their families
- The perceptions of how the needs of children, young people and their families were addressed at different stages of the pandemic response
- Understanding of the work that is ongoing in order to protect the wellbeing of children, young people and their families as the pandemic response progresses
- The perceptions of how children, young people and their families were communicated to by the Government about the response to the pandemic

**Outcome:** provide a report which will include the insights and key information to support Scrutiny's review

# Project scope and sample



## Scope:

Jersey children and young people, plus their parents and families

## Sample:

The target sample were as follows:

- children/young people in Key Stages 1-4, aged 5 to 16 with parental consent. Parental assistance if aged 3-5
- young people aged 16-25 who were in education, higher education, working, unemployed etc
- parents/parents to be children 0 to 3 (critical early years)
- parents of nursery children, school children and young people

Invitations to participate in this independent research were developed together, sending potential respondents to 4insight and sent by various methods, all being GDPR compliant;

- by 4insight to their panel of over 3,800 islanders
- promotion in collaboration with Jersey Cares, Children Services and social workers, the Bridge etc
- promotion by the Scrutiny Panel on social and traditional media

When potential respondents contacted 4insight they were screened to an agreed screener questionnaire, which included a broad mix of socio-demographic questions including income level, ethnicity, family situations, age etc. The screening criteria were discussed at the kick off briefing meeting, along with the actual target structure for each group.

# Methodology – 9 focus groups

To meet the aim and objectives independent qualitative research was conducted in the form of focus groups. This enabled us to ensure that we truly got the level of depth and understanding needed from BOTH the rational and importantly the emotional perspectives of how COVID has impacted children and young people. A sample size of over 40 participants is regarded as a good representative sample for qualitative research.

We ran 9 focus groups with 57 participants in total, including the children (with agreed parental consent for all those under 16). The following groups were conducted:

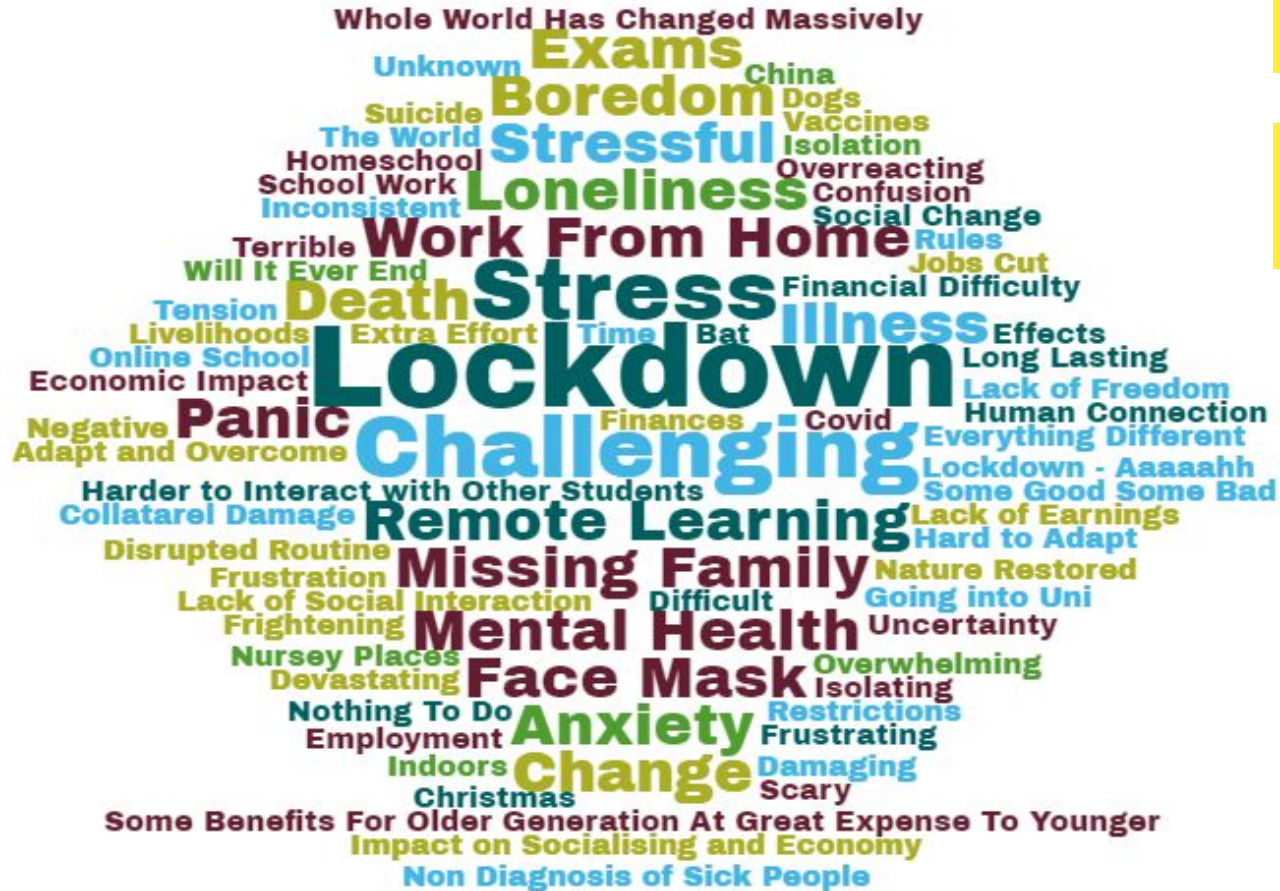
- 1 x 3 - 5 year old children with their parents
- 1 x 6 - 11 year old children with parents observing behind the mirrors
- 1 x 12 - 16 year old children
- 1 x 17 - 19 year olds
- 2 x 20 - 25 year olds
- 1 x parents of 0 - 3 year olds
- 1 x parents 3 - 10 year olds
- 1 x parents 11 - 18 year olds

It was planned to run one group with those in care, however the current situation meant this wasn't achievable in the time frame.

All the focus groups were conducted to an agreed discussion guide which included age appropriate projective techniques such as psycho drawing and identifying smiley faces reflecting many emotions for young children, plus first words, Thematic Apperception Tests (TATs) and sentence completion for those older. All these exercises were completed individually to eliminate any bias or leading. The qualitative focus groups were professionally moderated by 4insight and through the initial scene setting and our Neuro-linguistic Programming training we can eliminate any potential group think. Six of the focus groups were held at our professional observation facilities within COVID guidelines allowing key team members to view live through the one way mirrors. Three groups with those aged 17 to 25 were held on online on a professional research secure platform and included some university students still off island. Each group lasted about 90-100 minutes. The groups were digitally recorded and professionally analysed by 4insight.

# Detailed Results

Please write down the first words/associations that come to mind when I say  
“Impact of COVID”



All Respondents

58% had a negative sentiment, only 4% positive



Please write down the first words/associations that come to mind when I say  
“Impact of COVID”



Parents

68% had a negative sentiment, only 3% were positive

Please write down the first words/associations that come to mind when I say  
“Impact of COVID”



12-25 year olds

44% had a negative sentiment, 51% were factual

# Main challenges for young people were education, mental health and socialising from parents perception



- Overall parents perceived education an issue for all children, however it was more difficult for those with older children to get on with their work, whereas those with younger children felt that school-based education wasn't an immediate priority and that they would be able to catch up in the future:
  - GCSE aged students developing a lack of routine and not completing any school work, or doing so beyond normal hours
  - Working from home whilst homeschooling children, causing a lot of stress, some families did not have enough devices for the whole family which caused issues. There were also issues with slow broadband due to many users
  - Some students were given too much work while not receiving help
  - Cancelled exams caused strong uncertainty of passing exams/school year
  - Parents mentioned that different schools had different ways of dealing with the pandemic such as alternatives for exams, which caused confusion,

*"Home schooling was absolutely horrendous, working from home as a single parent, pressure of my job, 3 year old didn't get it - she just wanted to play. The mental health side of not being with friends and no structured school day, no challenge for her, she became bored, my stress came out on them because of work." Single mum of 8 and 3 year old, unsupported locally, full time job*

*"They hated the measures, hated the masks. They don't have to wear them but don't want teachers wearing them. It's like a hospital. I now go out my way to smile with my eyes." Mum, married, 4, 6 & 8 year old, part time*

*"3 year old and newborn twins, I wanted Mum to come and help but can't because she's off island, we had loads of challenges, keeping kids entertained, everything was closed, weather was nice but couldn't go to the playground." Dad, married, unsupported locally, 3 year old & 3 month old twins*

# Extra quotes

*"[back to school] A bit unstable for a while, for most year 11s there's so much work, so much in GCSEs, still doing mocks, he's gonna finish in 2 weeks it's so uncertain. He'd go out for the 2 hours exercise but friends would hover around so get told off by police, it was brutal caged in for 22 hours." Mum, lives with partner, 16 and 21 year old, full time job*

*"Homeschooling, working full time, dad was ill last year so having to try get back to the UK, he passed away. My child in preschool they had an app, eldest daughter had homework, school work, helping her was hard while working from home." Mum, married, unsupported locally, twins aged 2, 5 and 7 year old, full time job*

*"Worst was home teaching, I had to differentiate between 4, 6 and 8 year old." Mum, married, 4, 6 & 8 year old, supported locally, part time*

*"My daughter has tonnes of work, year 13 now, one teacher she can't get along with, just couldn't get help, screaming and shouting, slamming doors, first lockdown horrendous, school point horrendous geared up for exams. Don't know if she's going to pass or not, they changed teachers around." Mum, married, 18 & 24 year old, self-employed*

*"We didn't take education very seriously, not gonna put extra pressure on them, my son was assessed for autism, so taking him in and out of school frustrated him." Mum, married, 5 & 8 year old, unsupported locally, unemployed*

*"Went to see mum and dad, they love them but just stood there didn't want to cuddle them." Mum, married, 4, 6 & 8 year old, supported locally, part time*

*"I found it very difficult, my husband was busiest he's ever been, in IT, so I didn't have any help, very little support, very scary, with my job too. Felt like I let her down a bit, missed out on pre-school, let her play, constantly instead." Mum, married, 4 & 8 year old, part time*

# Main challenges for young people were education, mental health and socialising from parent's perception

- Socialising was a strong issue for most young people:
  - Overall, young people missed friends and family the most
  - Many felt the rules were disjointed - seeing friends in school however not being able to see friends in homes caused confusion for children
  - Those with young babies experienced their children developing social issues such as being alarmed by other people
  - Teenagers were mentioned as missing out on a lot such as parties, relationships, milestones such as prom and graduation
  - Those with young children struggled with entertaining their children, especially with playgrounds and play areas closed
- Mental health was a big concern for parents especially those with 10+ year old children. Some developed mental health concerns such as eating disorders, self harm, lack of social skills, “clingy” or distant. One mentioned she “only” had to wait 6 months for her daughter to be applied into CAMHS and was positive about this length of time due to hearing the waiting list is 2 years, however the others felt this was too long and not acceptable
- Those with young children struggled with having no family support, as well as young babies having not yet met them



*"Their exams were cancelled, became reclusive, so hard to re engage with school. She lost the ability to be social. February half term she dabbled in self harm, it's been really hard." Mum, married, 15 & 16 year old, works part time*

# Main challenges for young people were education and socialisation from the children's perception



- Education was harder at home and many struggled with the lack of socialising:
  - Many of the children felt home schooling was boring and much harder to do at home. They preferred the ease of access to resources and asking questions as well as seeing their friends. A few students also felt they didn't receive much help from teachers
  - Once the young people went back to school, they found difficulty with being in bubbles as they may not see/play with their friends at all. The older students expressed confusion toward the bubble rule as they would "all be in the school corridors at the same time anyway"
  - Some really missed partaking in sports such as swimming, football, dance, rugby or activities such as piano lessons
  - A few of the older students had no motivation at all to do school work so didn't do any
  - Mix of opinion on mask wearing in school- some did not mind it as they have become accustomed to it, however others really didn't like it at all
  - Exams were cancelled for students, a couple were happy as they performed better with coursework however others worried about having to go on to do A Levels with no experience of exams or revision
  - Many students at university felt they missed out on the traditional university experience this year, whereas others appreciated that lockdown allowed them to focus more on revision with less distractions. Some felt let down by the Government in relation to travel restrictions over the Christmas holidays

*"Masks. It ruins the lesson. They come in, I ask them to put their mask on and they're immediately upset and don't want to be there." Mum, married, 4, 6 & 8 year old, supported locally, part time*

## Extra quotes

*"They put a lot of restrictions on socialising, it affected the younger generation, affected universities and going out, economy a massive impact like businesses running down and our generation will be those who will pay for it in taxes for a few years to come."  
22 year old, university student*

*"It was bad, I really wanted to go outside, to play." 6 year old*

*"I'm more irritated now than I was last year, nothing to keep my mind sane, definitely boredom." 21 year old, working in Jersey*

*"Personally, I've been lucky, got a job, got into a new place, in that sense I've been lucky, as a key worker I've gone to work everyday, masks, jabs nice and early, but socially I want to go out and live my best life, seeing Jersey doing well last summer and seeing people in pubs now is tough to watch when stuck in the UK." 23 year old, working for the NHS*

*"Main challenge was meeting new people in Leeds, I was lucky some of my Jersey friends are also here so I wasn't alone, if you didn't know anyone it would be tough." 19, university student*

*"I haven't seen family in year a half, haven't seen anyone, looking forward to coming home, no family in UK at all." 23 year old, working for the NHS*



# Main challenges for young people were education and socialisation from the children's perception



- Lack of socialising was frustrating:
  - No socialising was a key issues for children all ages - those older couldn't meet up with friends in homes while the younger children disliked not being able to play
  - Many disliked being inside, especially during the first lockdown which had brilliant weather
  - Some expressed sadness about not seeing family on and off island. Most still have not seen family abroad and some of the babies hadn't met any other family such as grandparents

*"Lots of bad stuff, couldn't see the whole family and friends." (5 year old)*

*"When we went back to school, so many people in the halls, had the whole year in hall but it didn't make sense." (16 year old)*

*"I can't play with kids in other classes, can't pop their bubble." (10 year old)*

*"Bad, really wanted to go outside, to play." (6 year old)*

# Psycho drawings mainly with negative sentiments

Younger respondents (3 - 11-year olds) were asked to draw pictures of 'How they feel about COVID'

The majority of drawings had a negative sentiment and showed the impact of the pandemic on these children. There were a multitude of sad faces drawn as well as speech bubbles remarking about "Stupid COVID". One child respondent also drew a picture outlining the things she wasn't able to do during the pandemic

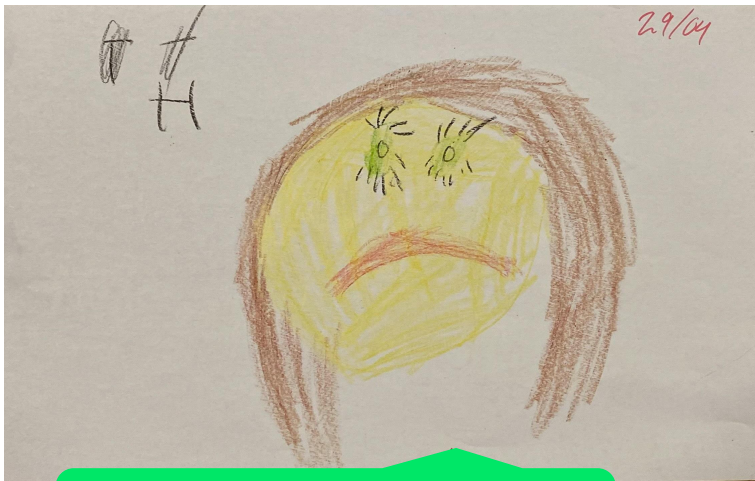
A few drawings had positive sentiments - one drew a rainbow. Some young respondents drew pictures of them with family members. The additional family time was perceived as a positive of the pandemic for young children

Others were mixed - another drew smiley faces and upset faces to illustrate the "ups and downs" of the COVID pandemic. 2 respondents also drew factual pictures of the virus

Examples of pictures on next slide

# Psycho drawings showed the negative impact of the pandemic on children as young as 6 and 7 years old

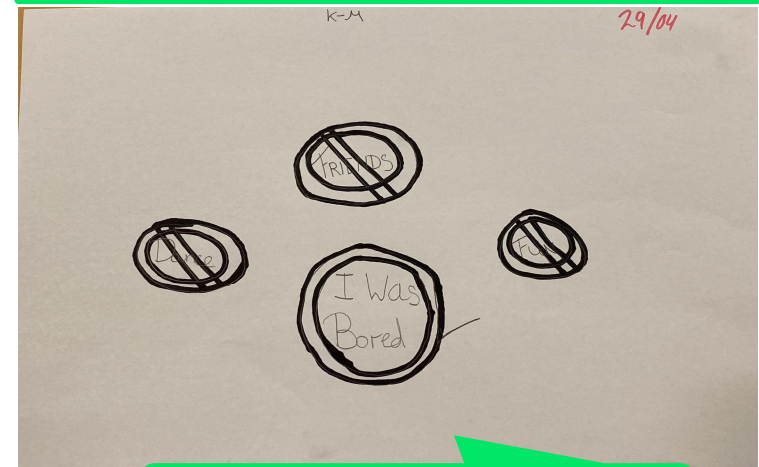
A 6-year old female respondent spontaneously drew a 'sad face' when asked to draw about the COVID Pandemic



"Frowny face, me, a sad face, because I wanted to go out but I couldn't."

"Me saying 'stupid corona'." 6 year old

A 7-year old female respondent drew about how she was unable to dance, see friends or have fun. She also drew that she was bored



"Things she can't do but can do."

"I've drawn smiley faces and sad faces, there were ups and downs, spent more time with family but no football, can't see friends." 10 year old

# The children aged 3-11 were asked to choose an emoji best describing how they felt about the pandemic

12 emoji options to choose from



"My head kept crashing out." 6 year old



"I was so bored and angry." 8 year old



"I was a bit annoyed that I couldn't see friends and do sport stuff like that." 10 year old



"Sunglasses, it was sunny, could play outside." 3 year old



"Smiley, it was very hot outside, lots of fun." 4 year old

The 6-11 year olds expressed more frustration toward the pandemic due to being bored and annoyed about being unable to play with friends, the very young children felt happy playing in the sun <sup>160</sup>

# Main implications from parents were their children's physical wellbeing, socialising and education



- Physical wellbeing was affected by Covid due to closures of activities such as swimming, football, martial arts, rugby, dance etc. Most of these activities were still closed at the time and parents worried if their children will want to return to them
- Children's social life and play was a key implication of Covid, some students displayed mental health concerns as well as social issues
- Parents had concerns regarding education; mostly for the older students due to the importance of passing their school year. Parents of younger students felt their children were affected however will be able to catch up in the future
- Lack of routine had a massive impact overall, with many young people staying up very late and sleeping in. This caused disruption to their school work and overall productivity
- Some parents mentioned that their toddlers were overly concerned with washing their hands
- Many children were bored due to closures of public areas, some also lacked outdoor space which left no room to play

*"The main challenge was my son. A 16 year old boy. He went completely nocturnal, refused to do any school work at all. Staying up late gaming, I was trying to get him up at lunch and he'd swear and shout. Once he was in the timeframe it was hard getting him out."*

*Mum, lives with partner, 16 and 21 year old, full time job*

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*"My daughter couldn't cope. She followed me around the house. She adores her friends, she couldn't cope. I see the implication of them not being at school for so long."*  
*Mum, married, 12 and 15 year old, part time job*

# Main implications for the younger people were feeling lazy and bored, the older young people had many disruptions in particular university



- The young children and young people felt more lazy and lethargic due to a lack of routine as well as feeling very bored
- Some students were struggling with being back at school and trying to catch up with school work
- One young person felt he couldn't catch up at all and will have to go into work instead of doing A Levels
- The university students had many disruptions; studies going online, no interaction with friends and issues traveling back to Jersey
- 2 young people worked the whole way through the pandemic, 1 was on the front line in the NHS due to being a medicine student, 1 was a mental health support worker here
- Those at university struggled with work experience due to it being cancelled, which they felt would affect future career options

*"The impact on socialising. Uni - not being able to go in. I went back in mid-February, purely for a change of scene. A bit too much time with the parents! Going back to in person teaching next week, it's not great that it's been online for a long time, most of the year."  
22 year old, university student*

*"I can't catch up, nothing makes sense, I'm getting an apprenticeship, it's for 4 years, you need 5 grades 4 and above, including maths english, I'm failing maths so I might have to do night school and do it again." 16 year old*

*"For me, I went online from March. It's been better online, more efficient than in person. For my course, we've not been in labs but it's been kind of good being online."  
21, university student*

# Extra quotes

*"I did dancing on a Saturday, had to go on Zoom, it was different." 7 year old*

*"There was like nothing else to do so I did push ups, got boring, couldn't play footie, cardio was awful too." 19 year old, university student*

*"Definitely mental health wise it was difficult and had to adapt. Had social media, still able to talk to friends. It was difficult not being able to be in the pool for the first month." 20 year old, Digital Academy*

*"I do product design, so usually I would be in the uni but only been in 4 hours this year." 19 year old, university student*

*"Massively changed how they're examining things. Everything a lot harder." 18 year old*

*"Last summer a lot of placements got cancelled, not been able to get work experience." 22 year old, university student*

*"Nothing like major, just not having a gym to go to, new ways to do things, but I'd just wanna sit about, not worth it at home." 18 year old*

*"I study in a digital workplace, after 2 week of online studying, we had Zoom fatigue, being online 8 hours a day, no socialising and no group work, more tiring definitely." 20 year old, Digital Academy*



# Groups who were perceived as most affected were islanders who enjoy sport, the older generation, teenagers and the high risk



- The different groups of islanders who were perceived as being most affected by the pandemic:
  - Those who enjoy or partake in sports were perceived as being let down by the Government, some felt physical education and other sporting activities should've been supported/open as they help with health and mental wellbeing
  - The older generation were strongly impacted by Covid, the isolation created loneliness and depression
  - Teenagers were strongly affected by the pandemic due to missing out on milestones and social occasions
  - High risk or vulnerable islanders were also deemed to have been affected due to not being able to go out of their house or see anyone
  - Those who had lost family members were massively affected. For example, one respondent's father had passed away during the pandemic. Due to being vulnerable, he wasn't able to see anyone during the last months of his life. His funeral was also held online

*"Not really [consider young people], but also they shouldn't. We're less at risk, as long as we're kind of taken care of then there's bigger worries." 19 year old, university student*

*"Mother in law is 88. The kids would go on driveway to talk, took some food over and talked twice a week. She was seriously lonely. People were complaining and she was like 'it's nothing, we lived through the occupation.'" Dad, married, unsupported locally, 3 year old & 3 month old twins*

# Main positives from parents were working from home and family time, the young people reported fewer positives

## Main positives from parents were working from home and family time



- Many parents enjoyed working from home as it created more flexibility to be able to spend more time with their family and may promote future work flexibility
- Overall more family time was deemed strongly positive
- Many reported the great weather during the first lockdown made it bearable and much more enjoyable to go for walks and cycles

*"The family time was great, the kids said that they loved the family time. It was nice having Daddy at home." Mum, married, 4, 6 & 8 year old, supported locally, part time*

*"I loved walking at the beginning. There were no cars, it was spring, there were birds." Dad, married, unsupported locally, 3 year old & 3 month old twins*

## Young people felt less positives came from the pandemic than the parents



- Mix of opinion on the amount of time spent with family, some really enjoyed bonding with their family, others were indifferent and preferred to be with their friends
- Some felt lockdown gave them more free time and also more time to revise instead of being distracted
- The 20-25 year olds felt happy with the amount of money they have saved during the lockdown due to not going out
- A few were happy about their exams being cancelled due to feeling they perform better with assessments/coursework

*"I had some time to do things I used to do. Reading books, it's a bit embarrassing but my family are into Lego. So we bought some Lego sets and were making them together. I enjoyed it again." 18 year old*

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# Government decisions frustrated and confused both parents and young people



- Parents were more negative about Government decisions than the young people/children
- Many felt some decisions didn't make sense;
  - Children able to do PE in school but not PE after school
  - Children meeting in schools but not in homes after school
- Some felt the Government were following the UK too much or choosing the economy over health
- They were very grateful for schools reopening
- Parents mentioned how different schools were doing things differently such as types of end of year assessment instead of exams
- Some found that schools were left to come up with all health and safety guidelines, not the Government
- Some felt the Government did the best they could have considering "it hasn't happened before"
- Closing the borders, mask legislation and isolation before test result was perceived as not implemented early enough
- Many disagreed with the decision of islanders being able to meet up during Christmas Day and Boxing Day, disregarding any religions other than Christianity

*"They were slow. Cases got to 800-odd. They could've reacted quicker and stopped the christmas isolation." 17 year old*



- The young children were unaware about Government decisions, however understood rules to be wearing a mask, washing hands and "not hugging"
- The children aged 5-16 found the the rules confusing such as meeting in schools but not in homes after school, they found this very frustrating
- Those aged 17-25 were more aware of Government decisions and found many frustrating. Young people also felt the Government were too slow with implementing some rules.
- The secondary school students were frustrated with the bubbles during school as the weren't able to see their friends if outside their class however large clusters of students would gather in the corridors
- A few also disagreed with the decision of islanders being able to meet up during Christmas Day and Boxing Day, disregarding any religions other than Christianity

*"The Government shut the door on young people and walked away, it angers me. They prioritised people at the end of their lives." Mum, married, 18 & 24 year old, self-employed*

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# Young people showed low awareness of mental health services available on Island

Only mentions of CAMHS were from parents. The children weren't aware of it until they had been referred. Many children and young people were unsure when asked 'Where would you go for support' or to name any mental health services / support / charities. There were some mentions of MIND from young people and parents.

No mentions over last 3 COVID Impact projects of Kooth.com, Listening Lounge, Jersey Talking Therapy or the Mental Health Network.

Some were aware of YES but there was no awareness of any specific services.

Maybe there was low awareness due to some schools taking charge, referring students to CAMHS or in-house provisions, counselling etc. Some young people had been phoned twice a week during lockdown being asked about their mental health. 'No need for awareness of external help if school provide / refer you anyway'.

Some young people said they would just ask their GP and expect them to signpost / refer them.

4 of the 16 proposed actions in the Children and Young People Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Draft Strategy are based around making it 'Easy for everyone to find help and support.' These apparently are to include a drop-in cafe, a Family Hub, a helpline and drop-in sessions. These appear excellent support, however wouldn't have increased awareness of any respondents in our research.

More advertising and explaining services to those who aren't actively seeking them is needed.

*"Both of my kids were referred to CAMHS, they had extra staff. The one referred from the doctor took a month, the one from school took 6 months. I thought it'd be 2 years" Mum, 167, married, 15 & 16 year old, works part time*

# Family impacts

- One respondent had to look after a 3 year old and newborn twins, with no help from any family. Their non-Jersey family were unable to come and help with the children, leaving the father working and the mother struggling to cope.
- There were calls for some financial packages from Government to allow for primary caring parents to be 'furloughed' and focus on looking after / homeschooling their children, They felt continuing to work from home whilst doing this was unsustainable and overwhelming.
- Some parents mentioned how nice it was to spend more time as a family during the pandemic. However, others had children who had become much more withdrawn from friends and family over the lockdown period.
- Many children and young people had been impacted by travel restrictions. Most had missed seeing either high-risk grandparents in Jersey or family members in the UK who were unable to travel to Jersey. One young person hadn't seen any family in 18 months due to the nature of his job in the UK and not being able to have the time off to isolate. This had a massive effect on his mental health.
- There were concerns for those in small apartments with limited access to technology being expected to perform remote learning / work from home when the whole family is in lockdown and at home.
- Some respondents had lost family members to COVID

*"The first lockdown was hard. My husband was working, had 2 kids doing schoolwork, I was working. We don't have a west wing, I had to leave my kids to do work on their own in their bedrooms. My daughter was really good, she'd work longer hours than normal, my son would convince me he'd been doing hard work." Mum, married, 15 & 16 year old, works part time*

*"Overall, it brought the family a bit closer together. Not just in our household, been making that extra phone call. It helped in a way. I have family in Scotland, a twice daily phone call to Grandma is built into my day now." Mum, married, 3, 5 & 8 year old, works full time*

# Opinion on communication from the Government was perceived as mixed by both parents and older children, young children unaware

Overall, respondents felt that Government communications throughout the pandemic could have been improved through better clarity and consistency; as well as by placing less blame on children and young people

*"[Press conference information] would be leaked before every time. It was really unprofessional, it happened on three different occasions." Mum, married, 4, 6 & 8 year old, supported locally, works part time*

Respondents mostly used social media or the evening news to stay up-to-date. Only a few mentioned using / downloading the COVID Alert App. There were mixed views on press conferences - most young people only watched if parents were. Gary Burgess' summaries were spontaneously mentioned, by both parents and young people, as being useful and a good alternative to watching the duration of the press conferences

*"It was frustrating when you'd go for walks on the beach and you'd see big groups of parents with toddlers. There's nothing to tell them off for gathering but had that been a group of teenagers there'd be an uproar. There were double standards. Young people were scapegoated." 21 year old*

*"If you're going to have a decision you know people will hate, explain the rational. Otherwise you just think it's unfair, explain the reasoning." Mum, married, 18 & 24 year old, self-employed*

Some felt they often were unsure of the rules and relied on other members of the community to tell them the rules as the press conferences were unclear. They also felt some rules didn't make sense and were not consistent with others. This confused children as they could sit next to someone in lessons all day at school but were not even allowed in that person's garden at the time

*"In our house all the children attend different schools, all got different messages...there needs to be one body and everybody doing the same thing." Mum, married, 12 & 13 year old, part time job*

Respondents, including both parents and children, felt that too much of the blame was apportioned to children and young people. Especially around the Halloween / December spike. They felt it unfair that young people were singled out - despite licensed premises flouting the rules. Many felt that this was wrong and that it was "easy to blame and use teenagers as scapegoats"

*"In my opinion, they didn't do amazing. We got the blame for a lot of stuff. No support for gyms or pubs whereas stuff for older people would have support." 17 year old*

# Exercise: “Our Government’s response to the pandemic, considering children, young people and their families would be so much better if .....

Many respondents felt the Government’s communications could have been improved. They felt they lacked clarity and put too much blame on young islanders. Respondents also wanted to know the reasoning behind the decision making and any medical evidence used

Respondents also mentioned the need to prioritise children’s mental health in the wake of the pandemic as they didn’t feel it was prioritised during the earlier stages of the pandemic at all

*“If there was a uniform message and strategy, more lenient towards creating 'bubbles' of contact to facilitate play within designated and closed groups of friends or family.”  
Dad, married, unsupported locally, 3 year old & 3 month old twins*

*“Be more consistent & communicate better & explain the reasoning behind decisions.”  
Mum, married, 18 & 24 year old, self-employed*

*“Please, please look after our children's' mental health. If they become poorly it takes years for them to recover.” Mum, married, 12 and 15 year old, part time job*

Some felt they should have considered the impact on islanders’ mental and physical health before prioritising the economic impact of the pandemic and lockdowns. Some felt a public consultation could have helped to achieve this

Other suggestions included: speaking to children and gaining their thoughts, being more lenient with regard to bubbles in schools and increasing consistency of rules at school with rules outside of schools e.g. allowed to sit next to someone for hours but not allowed in their garden

*“They stopped blaming young people for what they failed to prevent.” 16 year old*



# Exercise: Thematic Apperception Test / Bubble Chart

Teenage respondents were asked to fill in the potential feelings and conversations between two people their age throughout the pandemic

Most respondents spontaneously mentioned struggles regarding school work. Missing contact with friends was also a very prevalent theme

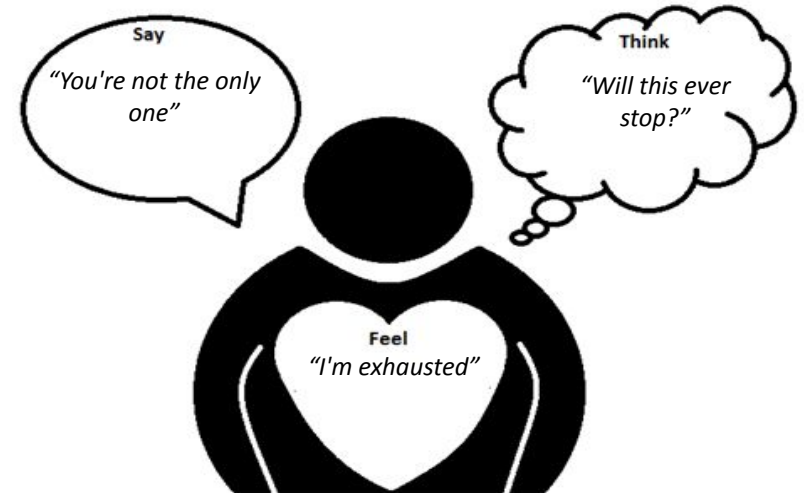
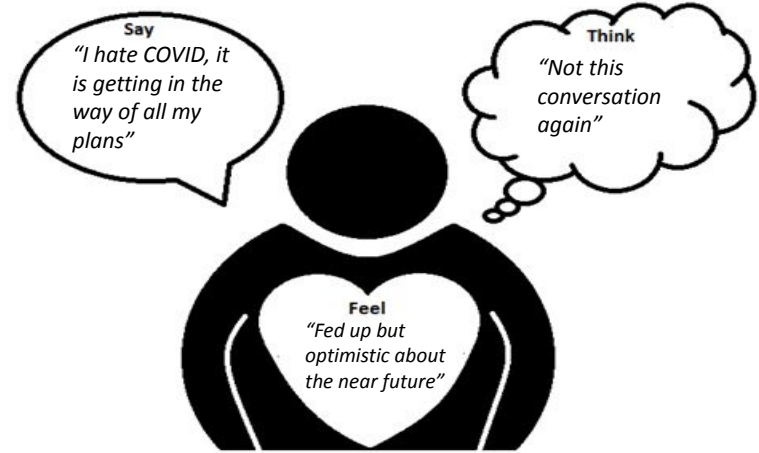
Emotions mentioned included: Upset, confused, lonely, angry, bored, worried and overwhelmed as well as relieved and happy they have more free time

An example below and on next slide:



Importantly, respondents complete both the "Say" bubbles and "Think" bubbles before the "Feel" bubbles

# Exercise: Thematic Apperception Test / Bubble Chart



# Executive Summary

## Parents



### Challenges

Main challenges for young people were education, mental health and socialising from parent's perception

### Implications

Main implications from parents were their children's wellbeing, socialising and education

### Positives

Main positives from parents were working from home and family time

### Communication

Opinion on communication from the Government was perceived as mixed by parents and older children, young children were unaware

## Children



### Challenges

Main challenges for young people were education and socialisation from the children's perception

### Implications

Main implications for the younger people were feeling lazy and bored

### Groups affected

Groups who were perceived as affected were islanders who enjoy sport, older generation, teenagers and high risk

### Decisions

Government decisions frustrated and confused both parents and young people

## Young people/ teenagers



### Challenges

Main challenges from the teenagers/young people were education, university, mental health and socialising

### Implications

Main implications which the young people faced included; studies going online, no interaction with friends and issues coming back to Jersey or spending too much time with family

### Positives

The young people were positive about the amount of free time, more time to revise instead of being distracted. The 20-25 year olds felt happy with the amount of money they have saved during the lockdown due to not going out

# QUESTIONS



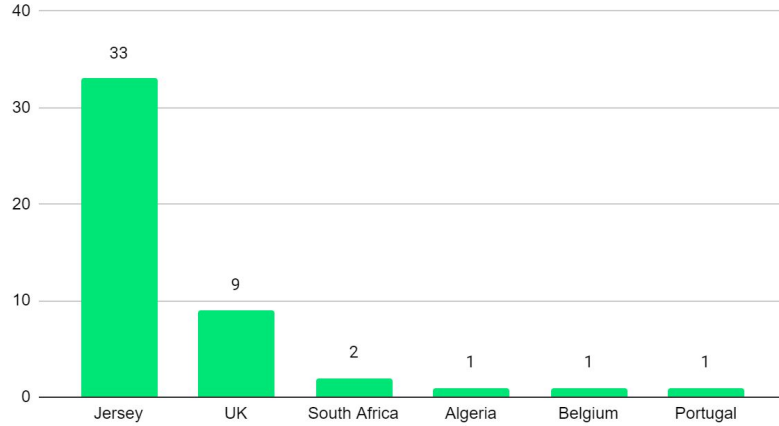
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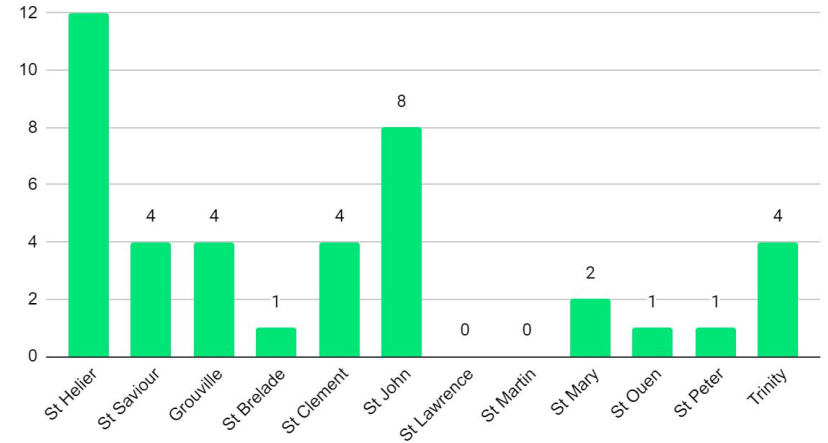
# Appendix

# Demographics

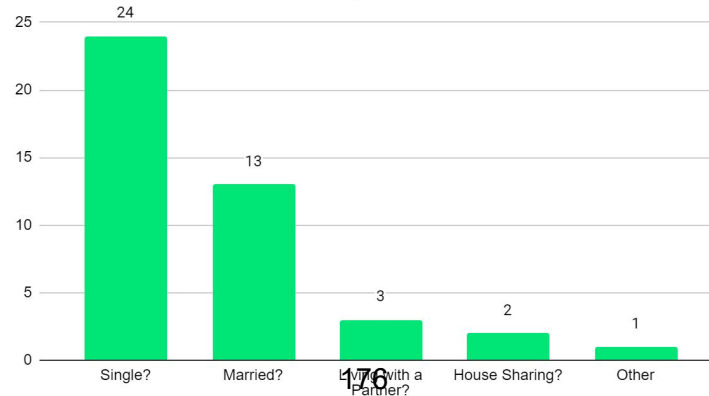
### Where were you born?



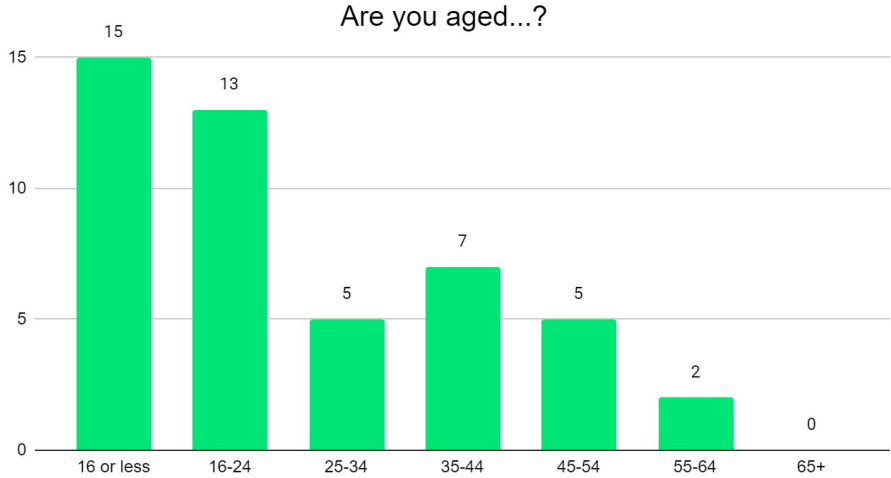
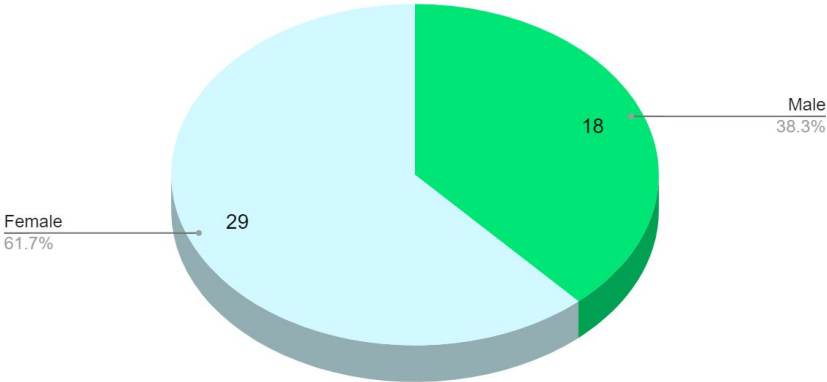
### Which Parish do you live in?



### Are you...?



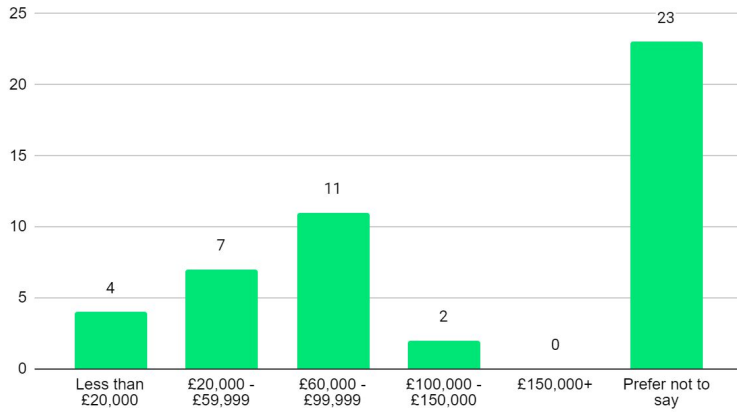
# Demographics



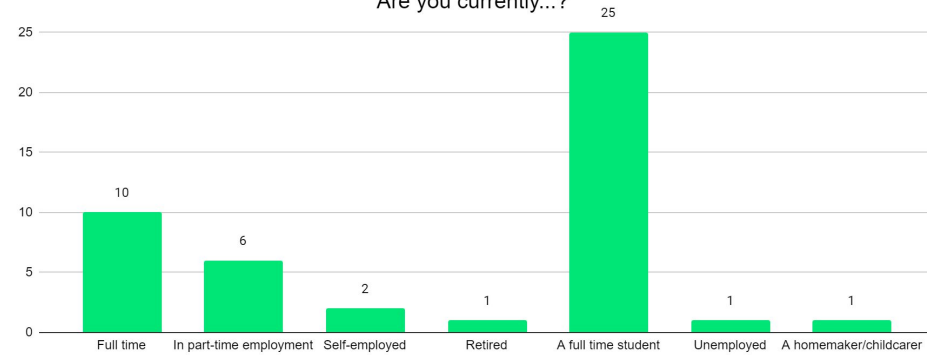


# Demographics

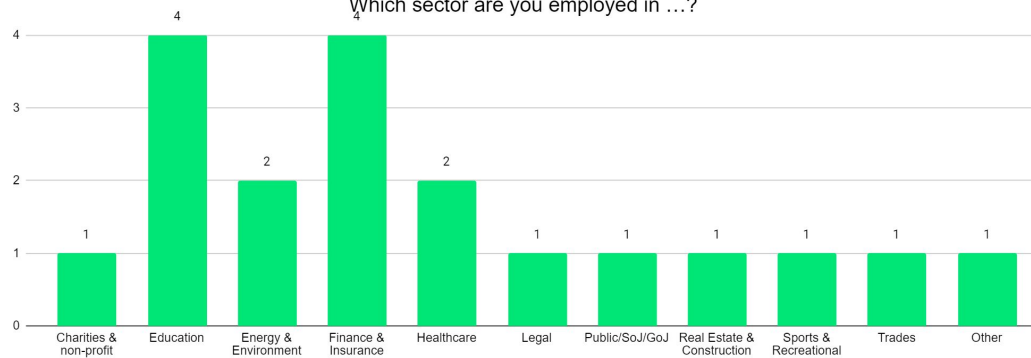
Which of the following best describes your total annual household income?



Are you currently...?

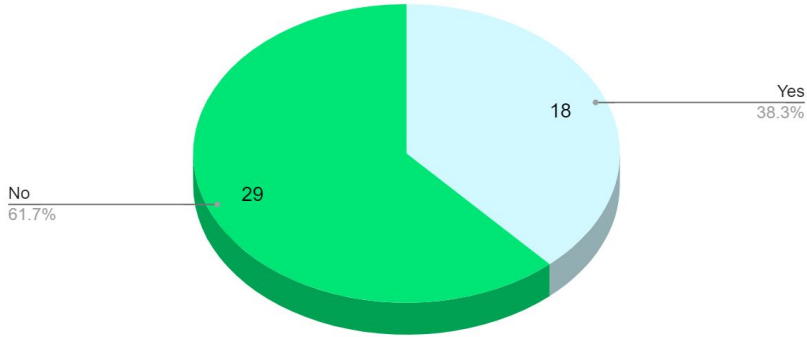


Which sector are you employed in ...?

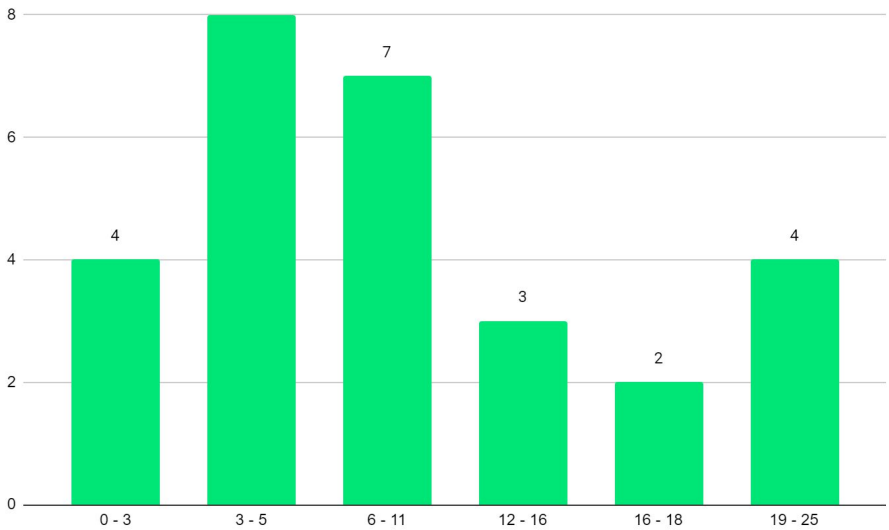


# Demographics

Do you have children?



Which age category do your children fit into?



# “Our Government’s response to the pandemic, considering children, young people and their families would be so much better if .....

**Parents of 11-18  
year olds**

*“More notice of changes / procedures that essential workers can carry out their job / role without negative impact to family / young kids e.g. leaving them all day at home unsupervised, lack of healthy meals available if parents are at work*

*More notice for teachers for changes / procedures so we can plan effectively for students and help them as much as possible i.e more notice and more consistent rules”*

*“The decisions had been consistent for example PE in schools was allowed but not outside of school hours*

*I think children's physical health and in-turn mental wellbeing has been hugely impacted.”*

*“Please, please look after our children's' mental health. If they become poorly it takes years for them to recover”*

*“Be more consistent & communicate better & explain the reasoning behind decisions”*

*“Greater focus on children's mental health - this is going to take years”*

# “Our Government’s response to the pandemic, considering children, young people and their families would be so much better if .....

Parents of 3-10  
year olds

*“Communication was improved and the opportunity to give individual family feedback from various backgrounds / sectors.  
Perhaps talking to children - seeing how they respond to specific questions”*

*“Their proposed strategies has been thoroughly challenged, including by people who had children in various age-groups, before implementation”*

*“There was a uniform message and strategy, more lenient towards creating 'bubbles' of contact to facilitate play within designated and closed groups of friends or family”*

*“They considered what the impact might be and prevent a mental health crisis occurring,  
Ensure the schools have effective training and provisions in place beforehand rather than waiting to see what will happen”*

# “Our Government’s response to the pandemic, considering children, young people and their families would be so much better if .....

Parents/children  
3-5 year olds

*“They had provided extra help for the younger children regarding their mental health.  
Giving clearer information regarding rules etc. so kids don't have to miss out on their school lives because of school confusing rules”*

*“Mums or both parents could have been financially supported to concentrate on looking after children  
Option to furlough based on caring contributions”*

*“Research into how children have been impacted by the pandemic and put in services to cover their needs.  
Create accessible mental health support for children who are not at direct risk. Early help could prevent escalation.  
About COVID: Clear response, that is well communicated to people, and understandable to all abilities (inc children)”*

“Our Government’s response to the pandemic, considering children, young people and their families would be so much better if .....

Parents of 0-3  
year olds

*“They consulted with the public, listened & took feedback on board”*

*“They had consulted certain family groups before making decisions to reflect on desires / fears and balance these against health concerns”*

*“They were more inclusive, if they didn't panic, if they didn't put money over people”*

# “Our Government’s response to the pandemic, considering children, young people and their families would be so much better if .....

12-16 year olds

“They thought of things for families to do during lockdown like if they organised activities for parishes or something”

“If they gave us more insight about Covid-19 in the form of texts as this was very direct and gave the message out to everyone”

“They lock the borders and open everything in Jersey”

“They made a platform young people used eg instagram and put info/updates on it or messaged us on text message so we were aware of latest updates. Told school to talk to us about stuff / update us.”

“They stopped blaming young people for what they failed to prevent”

“Faster reactions to changing situations (i.e. rising numbers etc)  
More easy to understand press conferences (less rambling)  
Fairer restrictions”

“The Government found a way for young people to keep up with the news”

# “Our Government’s response to the pandemic, considering children, young people and their families would be so much better if .....

20-25 year olds

*“They had better targeted the spread of information about the pandemic more towards social media/online platforms to help inform the larger majority”*

*“They had a better idea of their needs”*

*“If there was help with rent”*

*“They had supported the hobbies that young people enjoy so they're more available when everything opened”*

*“They had acted sooner and not waited for the situation to get worse before making any major decisions. Maybe slightly more safety conscious and less economic”*





## 11. Appendix Three

### 11.1 Terms of Reference

The Panel's Terms of Reference for the Review were as follows:

1. To identify and assess the Government of Jersey's response to the Covid-19 pandemic in respect of actions and decisions taken affecting children and young people from conception to aged 25.
2. To assess the decisions taken affecting children and young people arising from STAC advice and their appropriateness and proportionality and also the ethos, culture and processes in relation to children and families within key decision-making bodies such as Council of Ministers, Competent Authorities, Emergencies Council and Government Departments
3. To gather and examine the views of children, young people and their families in relation to the actions and decisions taken to date affecting them in respect of the Covid-19 pandemic response.
4. To identify and assess the ongoing workstreams to assist children and young people in the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and how the Government of Jersey is learning from the experience (both positive and negative) of children and young people.

### 11.2 Panel Membership

The Panel comprised of the following States Members for this review. It should be noted that Senator Tracey Vallois did not participate in the review due to a declared conflict of interest as the former Minister for Education at the outset of the pandemic. Deputy Mike Higgins also did not take part in this review.



Deputy Rob Ward, Chair



Deputy Louise Doublet, Vice Chair and  
Lead Member for the review

### 11.3 Panel Advisers

#### Dr Ceri Brown

Ceri is a sociologist of education whose work takes an interdisciplinary child-led perspective in researching the educational experiences of children and young people. Ceri's research interests include the impacts of educational policy on children's social and emotional wellbeing, educational achievements and life chances, and theorising the barriers or binds of disadvantage that prevent children from achieving educational success and that explain inequalities. She has over 15 years' experience in conducting research with children and young people and has published widely across the disciplines of education, social psychology, human geography and sociology.

#### Dr Michael Donnelly

Michael is a sociologist of education interested in the relationship between education and society, including the impact of education policy on children and young people, especially in terms of educational inequality, inclusion, social/emotional wellbeing and social mobility. He has over 10 years' experience researching these topics and has published widely across the disciplines of education, geography and sociology.

During the review, the Panel's Advisers undertook the following meetings with key stakeholders in order to inform the review:

Date	Officers/Job Title
Friday 25 <sup>th</sup> June	<b>Senator Sam Mézec</b> (previous Minister for Children and Housing up until November 2020)
Monday 28 <sup>th</sup> June	<b>Deborah McMillan</b> – Children's Commissioner for Jersey
Monday 28 <sup>th</sup> June	<b>Senator Tracey Vallois</b> (previous Minister for Education up until January 2021)
Tuesday 29 <sup>th</sup> June	<b>Fiona Vacher</b> – Executive Director of the Jersey Child Care Trust (JCCT)
Wednesday 30 <sup>th</sup> June	<b>Dr. Ivan Muscat</b> – Medical Officer for Health <b>Alex Khaldi</b> – Interim Director of Public Health <b>Dr. Patrick Armstrong</b> – Medical Director and Chair of STAC
Friday 2 <sup>nd</sup> July	<b>Seán O'Regan</b> – Group Director Education <b>Keith Posner</b> – Head of Office, Department for Children, Young People, Education and Skills (CYPES) <b>Nick Jewell</b> – Head of Facilities Management CYPES <b>Jonathan Williams</b> – Project Director, Education Reform Programme (previously Policy Officer in relation to Education response to Covid-19)
Wednesday 7 <sup>th</sup> July	<b>Mark Owers</b> – Director of Safeguarding and Care, Children's Services CYPES <b>Nicola Mulliner</b> – Head of Early Years, CYPES
Thursday 8 <sup>th</sup> July	<b>Jane Lancaster-Adlam</b> – Head of Inclusion CYPES <b>David Berry</b> – Professional Partner, Education <b>Rachel Baxter</b> – Senior Adviser, Education

## 11.4 Public Hearings

The Panel undertook the following public hearings during its review:

Witness	Date
Deborah McMillan, Commissioner for Children and Young People Andrea Le Saint, Senior Practitioner, Human Rights Information	17 <sup>th</sup> January 2022
Senator John Le Fondré, Chief Minister  Deputy Scott Wickenden, Minister for Children and Education  Rob Sainsbury, Acting Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills (CYPES)  Seán O’Regan, Group Director, Education, CYPES  Keith Posner, Head of Office, CYPES  Mark Owers, Director of Safeguarding and Care and Chief Social Worker  Nicola Mulliner, Head of Early Years  Anne Homer, Finance Director CYPES  Elaine Walker, Head of Communications for CYPES  Alex Khaldi, Interim Director, Public Health Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance  Martin Knight, Head of Public Health  David Berry, Professional Adviser and Professional Partner to Schools, CYPES	3 <sup>rd</sup> February 2022
Deputy Scott Wickenden, Minister for Children and Education  Deputy Trevor Pointon, Assistant Minister for Children and Education  Constable Richard Vibert, Assistant Minister for Children and Education  Kate Roberts, Senior Policy Officer, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance  Andrew Heaven, Director of Children’s Policy  Susan Devlin, Group Director, Integrated Services and Commissioning	4 <sup>th</sup> February 2022 *this hearing was a regularly scheduled quarterly hearing with the Minister for Children and Education, however, questions in relation to the review were covered during the hearing.

Mark Owers, Director of Safeguarding and Care	
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Robert Sainsbury, Acting Director General for Children, Children, Young People, Education and Skills	
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## 11.5 Review Costs

The total cost of this review was £38,066. This was broken down as follows:

- 4insight focus groups - £17,500
- Panel Advisers - £20,000
- Postcards - £266
- Public Hearings - £300



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