



Annual Report 2024

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FOREWORD

Writing the foreword to an annual report can feel a little bit like that classic New Year's Eve moment, when you find yourself poised between the year that has just been and the one that lies ahead. It is an opportunity to celebrate successes, and a chance to learn from challenges faced, as we equip ourselves for the work of 2025.

The first major project for 2024 was to develop a new four-year Strategic Plan for the Office of the Children's Commissioner for Jersey (OCCJ). This meant that I was plunged straight into the part of this job that never gets old: hearing from children themselves about the things that really matter to them.

Many of these views and opinions came to us through the online surveys we ran in the first months after I took up post as Children's Commissioner; however, a sizeable chunk (around 300) was also delivered in person, by the children and young people I met in the Island's schools. These visits took me to 16 schools in total – not quite the full complement I had in mind but a good, insightful and energising start.

The resulting Strategic Plan has brought clarity and focus to the work of the OCCJ, and the ensuing business plan has already proved itself as a worthy framework for current and future work streams. One such project, Together@10 Our rights, your actions (the event that we organised with our Youth Advisory Group to celebrate World Children's Day), was a wonderful culminating moment in a busy year.

Representing Jersey's children and young people at a session of the UN Human Rights Committee on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and securing a recommendation specific to the Island about raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility, was another 2024 highlight.

However, as is only to be expected, last year had its share of challenging moments too. Not least among these was the somewhat daunting (for a Jersey newbie) job of learning about the way Island life functions, from the fascinating aspects of geography, history and culture, through to the sometimes-baffling landscape of local law and policymaking, not to mention a whole new system of governance and administration to adjust to.

Needless to say, time was not always on my side. As I mentioned above, my initial plans had been to visit every school on the Island, and yet I finished up the year having only set foot in 16. Competing priorities, introductory meetings and unforeseen events all took time. Still, on the bright side, I have at least another 25 school visits and meeting with hundreds more young Islanders to look forward to.

In 2025, I will still be learning about the Island and its children and young people and how best to serve them. I fully expect it to be another busy year and look forward to meeting many more Islanders who will help me climb that learning curve.



Dr Carmel Corrigan

INTRODUCTION

Background

The Office of the Children's Commissioner Jersey (OCCJ) was established under the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Jersey) Law 2019. As an independent statutory body and Jersey's only human rights institution, the OCCJ's role is to protect and promote children's rights in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The OCCJ's main functions, duties and powers are:

Functions

- To make sure children, young people and adults know about and understand the rights of children and young people.
- To ensure that people in power and with influence in Jersey respect, protect and fulfil the rights of children and young people.
- To provide advice to the Government of Jersey on improvements to laws and policies to enhance the realisation of children's and young people's rights.
- To encourage adults to listen to and consider children's and young people's views when decisions are made that affect their lives.
- To monitor how Jersey laws comply with the UNCRC and other international human rights treaties and conventions, and to make recommendations that bring Jersey laws into line with them.
- To encourage the Government of Jersey to sign and implement any other European or international treaties or conventions that will protect the rights of children and young people.

Duties

- Using the UNCRC and other relevant human rights instruments, including those already signed up to by Jersey, as the basis for their work.
- Involving children and young people and the people who work with them in the work of the OCCJ.
- Publishing a strategic plan explaining the work of the OCCJ at least every four years.
- Making sure children and young people know about the role of the Children's Commissioner and how to contact the OCCJ.

- Publishing an annual report every year that sets out what we have done to promote and protect the rights of children and young people.

Powers

- Provide children and young people with information about their rights.
- Support children and young people to complain to the relevant organisation.
- Bring concerns and complaints to the attention of people and organisations who provide services to children, request relevant information and seek to help them to solve any problems or complaints.
- Investigate cases where the rights of children and young people have not or might not have been upheld and make recommendations about how things could be improved.
- Take legal cases to court on behalf of children and young people or, in certain circumstances, support children and young people who are going to court.

A range of factors must be considered before the Commissioner exercises many of these powers. When considering the most appropriate approach, the Commissioner also takes advice from their staff, their advisory panels and, where necessary, legal advice. While aiming to serve the best interest of the child and afford due process to all involved, the OCCJ seeks to support local, early resolution of concerns brought to it.

OUR VALUES

In 2024, the OCCJ set out its core organisational values. These are not only a reflection of the Office's statutory obligations but also of the standards to which the OCCJ aspires in the delivery of all work and services.

In everything it does, the Office of the Children's Commissioner for Jersey (OCCJ) will strive to uphold and demonstrate the following values:

Child-centred

Children and young people are at the centre of all that we do. We will, at all times, seek to act in the best interest of the child. As part of achieving this, we will seek their views and their participation in our work.

Accountable

We are open, honest and responsible in everything we do. We will act with integrity at all times.

Fair

We treat everyone with respect, dignity and compassion. We will counter discrimination of any kind in our work.

Authoritative

We will always seek to be informed, confident and trustworthy in our views and opinions, thereby building and enhancing respect for the authority of the OCCJ.

Dedicated

We will use our powers and functions to protect and promote the rights of children and young people in Jersey, accepting the difficulties and challenges involved.

Constructively Critical

We will be constructively critical in our work for children and young people, and welcoming of constructive challenges to our work. This will promote a solutions-focussed, reflective and continuous improvement approach in ourselves and others.

Independent

We will champion children's rights in all circumstances. We will not be unduly influenced by people in power, with influence in politics, the media, or any other setting.

2024: THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW COMMISSIONER

Following an extensive and transparent recruitment process, Dr. Carmel Corrigan assumed the role of Children's Commissioner on March 4, 2024.

Recruitment Process

The search for a new Commissioner began in 2023 with a widely advertised recruitment campaign, attracting applications from a range of highly qualified candidates. The selection process was rigorous and designed to ensure that the successful candidate possessed the necessary expertise, vision and commitment to champion the rights of children and young people in Jersey.

In November 2023, shortlisted candidates underwent a comprehensive interview process. The selection panel included representatives from the Government of Jersey, local experts on children's rights and services, and a former Children's Commissioner for England. A critical component of the process was the involvement of young people, ensuring that their perspectives were also central to the selection, with all candidates being interviewed by a panel of children. This participatory approach reflected a commitment to empowering children and young people in key decision-making processes and informing the work of the Office.

Following the interviews, Dr Corrigan was nominated for the position in November 2023. Her appointment was subsequently approved by the States Assembly in December 2023, confirming her as the new Children's Commissioner for Jersey.



Dr Carmel Corrigan

Dr Carmel Corrigan has spent much of her career advocating for children's rights and welfare. Originally from County Louth, Ireland, she pursued a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Sociology at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, followed by a Postgraduate Diploma in Child and Family Law from the Irish Law Society. She later earned a Ph.D. in Social Work and Social Policy from Trinity College Dublin, focusing on children's rights, protection and participation in family court proceedings.

Dr Corrigan was a key member of the Ombudsman for Children's Office in Ireland for 13 years, initially as a complaints investigator and then as Head of Participation and Rights Education. In these positions, she worked to embed children's rights in government policies and practice, ensuring that young people's voices were heard in decision-making. She engaged with national and international bodies, including the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, advocating for stronger protections and participatory practices.

Her work emphasised the importance of children's involvement in shaping policies that affect them. Through extensive collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organisations, she championed the implementation of children's rights at both national and international levels.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE 2024-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

Following the appointment of the new Commissioner, the OCCJ needed to devise and publish a new Strategic Plan for the coming four-year period. This was the Office’s first major project of 2024.

In developing the Strategic Plan for 2024-2027, the OCCJ conducted a comprehensive consultation (Your Island, Your Rights) between April and June 2024. This process engaged approximately 1,100 children and young people, and more than 200 adults, across Jersey, gathering insights into the issues they deemed most pressing (see p11 Consulting with young people).

The consultation employed various methods to ensure inclusivity and genuine representation of young voices. Views were gathered through surveys, focus groups and interactive sessions, allowing participants to express their views on matters affecting their lives. The findings from this extensive engagement directly informed the OCCJ’s strategic priorities.

Other sources that fed into the final draft of the Strategic Plan included the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child issued to the UK State Party, including Jersey, in 2023; the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on Human Rights issued to the UK State Party, including Jersey, in 2024; the OCCJ’s previous casework; consultation with key stakeholder organisations; previous, ongoing and forthcoming Government of Jersey plans, strategies, policies and legislation; and input from the OCCJ’s advisory panels.

Based on the consultation outcomes from the sources listed above, the OCCJ identified six strategic priorities:

Educational inequality	Addressing disparities in educational access and outcomes to ensure every child has the opportunity to maximise their potential.
Children experiencing poverty	Combating the effects of poverty on children, aiming to improve their standard of living and access to essential services.
Play and leisure	Promoting the importance of play and recreational activities in child development and wellbeing.
Mental health and wellbeing	Enhancing support systems to ensure children and young people have access to mental health resources.
Children in care	Improving the care system to better support children in foster care and other care arrangements.
Youth justice	Advocating for fair treatment of young people within the justice system and supporting rehabilitation efforts.

More information on the findings of our consultation, as well as the Plan itself, are published on our [website](#).

The Strategic Plan is structured around seven key 'pillars', which have at their root the core duties and functions of the Office. In undertaking this work, the OCCJ's focus will be on the six themes identified above. These pillars underscore the Commissioner's commitment to addressing the challenges children and young people face. Detailed implementation plans are being developed for each pillar, outlining actions, timelines and collaborative efforts with relevant stakeholders. We have also used the seven pillars to organise the content of this report. They are:

- 1 **Promoting awareness of children's rights and the OCCJ:** We will raise awareness and educate the public about children's rights. This includes engaging with children, parents and professionals, collaborating with key stakeholders, and using media, events and initiatives to promote understanding. Through these efforts, the OCCJ aims to embed human rights principles into everyday life in Jersey and encourage informed discussions on rights.
- 2 **Demonstrating and promoting best practice in the involvement of children:** The OCCJ is committed to ensuring that children's voices are heard in decisions affecting them at all levels. To achieve this, we will enhance accessibility, conduct consultations, strengthen our Youth Advisory Group, create direct engagement opportunities with decision-makers and collaborate with stakeholders to promote meaningful child participation in decision-making processes across the Island.
- 3 **Protecting children's rights:** The OCCJ provides advice and support when children's rights concerns are raised. We will increase awareness of our casework function, promote early and effective resolution of issues, use our full powers for complex cases, and collaborate with key stakeholders to ensure children's rights are upheld and best outcomes are achieved.
- 4 **Monitoring and advising Government:** The OCCJ monitors how well children's rights are upheld in Jersey by holding organisations, including the Government, accountable. We will review policies, regulations, and laws, analyse their impact on children, and identify opportunities to influence services, policy and legislation to ensure children's rights are respected and protected.
- 5 **Progressing incorporation of the UNCRC:** The OCCJ is dedicated to supporting and challenging the Government of Jersey to help honour its commitment to gradually incorporate the UNCRC into Jersey law. This will include identifying priority legislative areas, assisting with the implementation of the Children (Convention Rights) (Jersey) Law 2022, and providing expert policy and legislative advice to the Government.
- 6 **Engaging at international level:** The OCCJ engages with international human rights systems to uphold children's rights in Jersey. We will collaborate with UK, Irish and European counterparts, participate in treaty reporting mechanisms, and contribute to global discussions through conferences, events and publications, ensuring Jersey benefits from and contributes to international expertise on children's rights.
- 7 **Being an effective and efficient independent human rights institution in Jersey:** The OCCJ, as Jersey's only human rights institution, is committed to accountability, efficiency and continuous improvement. We will uphold legal responsibilities, ensure financial compliance, enhance transparency in decision-making, explore ways to strengthen our independence, and foster a learning environment for staff to maintain high standards in promoting and protecting children's rights.

1. PROMOTING AWARENESS OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND THE OCCJ

All children and young people should be able to enjoy all their rights, but some find this more difficult than others, for a variety of reasons. These include not knowing about their rights, not having an adult in their life who knows that they have rights, and a lack of understanding of, and attention to, rights in the services and systems that support them. Raising awareness of, and providing education on, human rights is one of our statutory functions, and our first strategic pillar is to continue to build on our work in this area.

UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools

During 2024, the OCCJ was involved in the evaluation and registration of five schools, with two of those schools going on to receive the Silver Award and a third receiving the Gold Award.

In December 2024, after six years of investing in and promoting the Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) programme (see box What is Rights Respecting Schools?), the OCCJ transferred responsibility for the scheme to the Children, Young People, Education and Skills (CYPES) Department.

The RRS programme has created a strong foundation for children's rights education across the Island's primary and secondary schools. Every one of the Island's schools has been involved with the programme during the past six years, which puts Jersey in a minority of jurisdictions to have embedded the scheme so comprehensively.

The OCCJ supported CYPES in the transition of the scheme and will continue to reinforce the work of the RRS programme in all its future projects involving the Island's schools and students.

Promoting children's rights in the media and online

Throughout 2024, the work of the Commissioner and her team at the OCCJ was reported in print and broadcast media outlets. These included front page news stories in the Jersey Evening Post, television interviews on ITV News Channel TV and BBC Channel Islands News, as well as appearances and interviews on BBC Radio Jersey and Channel 103.

The Commissioner also began a regular series of monthly columns in the Jersey Evening Post, in which she has addressed issues such as child poverty, mental health and education reform.

Throughout the year, the OCCJ's website had 5,300 unique visitors, with the most noticeable spike in traffic occurring during the public consultation for the Strategic Plan 2024-27 (see p7). In the autumn of 2024, work began to scope a comprehensive redesign of the website to make this a better source of information on human rights and the OCCJ for a variety of audiences.

What is Rights Respecting Schools?

The Rights Respecting Schools Award is a UNICEF initiative that aims to put children's rights at the heart of schools.

It embeds children's rights in daily school life and empowers children to grow into responsible, active global citizens.

The programme involves working with schools to create safe and inspiring places to learn, where children are respected, their talents are nurtured, and they are able to thrive.

The Award recognises the achievement of a school in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into practice within the school and beyond.

There are three stages to the award:

- Bronze: 'Rights Committed'.
- Silver: 'Rights Aware'.
- Gold: 'Rights Respecting'.

On social media, the Office continued to develop its presence, with a particular emphasis on platforms most commonly used by children and young people (notably TikTok, which saw a steady rise in followers in 2024, reaching more than 3,800 by the end of the year).

The OCCJ also invited members of its Youth Advisory Group (YAG) to organise and deliver a 'media takeover' for the Together@10 event (see p11). This involved establishing a media sub-group and liaising with BBC Channel Islands News television and radio journalists to create content for and about the event. The young people interviewed key attendees and were, in turn, interviewed themselves for the final broadcast package. They also posted across the OCCJ's social media platforms.

Meetings and events

The flagship event for the OCCJ in 2024 was Together@10, which gave young Islanders the chance to talk directly with decision-makers about the issues that affect their lives. This came towards the end of the year, to mark World Children's Day in November, and is discussed elsewhere in this report (see p11).

Aside from this main event, and other project- or case-specific meetings, a key part of the Commissioner's role in promoting and protecting children's rights is to meet with a range of professionals and service-providers from relevant organisations in the Island. In-person meetings are key to the OCCJ's awareness-raising and influencing work, and with 2024 marking her appointment as the new post-holder, the Commissioner was particularly keen to meet as many Islanders as possible whose work and volunteering puts them in contact with the lives of children.

To that end, between taking up her post in March and the end of 2024, the Commissioner attended more than 140 meetings with organisations and individuals in Jersey, ranging from politicians, Government officials and representatives of the States of Jersey Police through to heads of services for children and young people, mental health professionals and third sector bodies, and of course, schools and youth groups. The Commissioner also met with the Council of Ministers, where she presented her new Strategic Plan and the key themes that the OCCJ will be focusing on over the next four years. It was agreed that the Commissioner should meet with the Council of Ministers two to three times a year.

As well as representing the OCCJ at international events and conferences in 2024 (see p20), the Commissioner and her team also engaged with official visitors to the Island and participated in events and conferences that were held in Jersey. Examples of these kinds of engagements are:

- In March, the OCCJ was invited to meet a visiting delegation of officials from the Ministry of Investment, Innovation and Social Development in the Cayman Islands. The delegation was visiting the Island on a fact-finding mission to learn about Jersey's approach to child safeguarding. The OCCJ was delighted to be able to share a presentation with the delegation about its role of promoting and protecting children's rights in Jersey.
- In November, the OCCJ attended the Reel Life Conference hosted by the Safeguarding Partnership Board and NSPCC Jersey. The event launched a new online safety campaign, addressing the significant rise in 'self-generated' child sexual abuse material online. OCCJ team members took part in the panel discussion, exploring the challenges and opportunities for addressing online harms in Jersey.

Pause for Play

The Pause for Play programme was established in November 2021 by agreement between the OCCJ and the Governor of HMP La Moye, with funding support from Andium Homes. It is a family play programme based at HMP La Moye, with sessions offered every fortnight throughout 2024 to prisoners and their families.

Many prisoners at HMP La Moye have family members under the age of 18. The Pause for Play programme provides opportunities for children to engage in meaningful, nurturing play with parents or other family members who are in prison.

Work began in 2024 to explore the possibility of transferring the programme to another organisation better placed to deliver the kind of play activities and family connections that it aims to deliver.

2. DEMONSTRATING AND PROMOTING BEST PRACTICE IN THE INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN

A fundamental right of every child is to have their views heard and considered in decisions that affect them. This is in every sphere of their lives, including in their family, at school, by support services and at government level. Not all adults are comfortable with or know how to involve children in their work. Additionally, not all children know how to access the OCCJ or other avenues to have their views heard.

There are two ways in which the OCCJ promotes best practice; first is in the projects we generate ourselves, second is in advising others.

Consulting with young people

Youth Advisory Group (YAG)

As with the OCCJ's two other statutory advisory panels (see p24), the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) is fundamental to the Children's Commissioner's work. They are the cornerstone of the Office's participation function, and although they are only required to meet five times a year, in practice, the schedule is much more frequent.

Membership of the YAG is comprised of children and young people between the ages of 8 and 18. In 2024, the group's membership changed, with some long-standing members ageing out and some new members joining. In total, there were 10 permanent members.

The YAG provided insight, advice, ideas, inspiration, knowledge, feedback and experience across a range of issues. Much of the group's work over the course of the year was focused on the development and delivery of Together@10 (see p11).

Strategic Plan

The OCCJ gathered views and opinions on the issues facing children and young people in Jersey through three carefully designed online surveys, tailored to the following age groups: children aged under 13; young people aged 13-17; adults aged 18 and over.

These surveys were hosted on the OCCJ's website for a ten-week period between 22 April and 30 June 2024, supported by a promotional campaign (#YourIslandYourRights) across the OCCJ's social media channels, interviews in the broadcast and print media, as well as more targeted awareness-raising communications via email and in-person visits to schools and various youth groups. The Office also placed posters in key locations around the island.

In total, over 800 children (319 under-13s; 516 aged 13-17) and 230 young people and adults (aged 18+) completed the online surveys; over 300 children in 16 schools around the Island (including ten primary schools and six secondary schools) were consulted with during visits by the Commissioner.

Together@10: A World Children's Day event

2024 marked the 10th anniversary of Jersey's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and to commemorate the occasion, the OCCJ orchestrated a landmark event. Designed and delivered with a group of young advisers, Together@10 put local young people and decision-makers in a room together for a day of structured discussion, presentations and speeches. A report detailing the planning, execution and outcomes of this impactful event can be found [here](#).

Recognising the need for a child-led approach, the OCCJ worked closely with its existing Youth Advisory Group (YAG), as well as inviting additional children on board who were interested in this project. This expanded YAG played a central role in shaping the event, ensuring it remained for children, by children.

The initial workstream, #My10Words, encouraged children and young people to express their experiences in ten words—one for each year since Jersey ratified the UNCRC. Contributions were gathered through social media, school visits and community outreach. The responses were later displayed at the event and on public hoardings in partnership with Andium Homes.

Young People's Presentations

A core element of the event was the series of presentations delivered by young people, focusing on rights in the UNCRC. Under the guidance of Daniel Austin, Director of the Jersey Arts Centre, the YAG members refined their speeches and gained confidence in public speaking. Their compelling presentations addressed the issues of disability rights, education, mental health, having a voice, play and leisure, and housing.

The Journey Film Screening

The event featured a screening of *The Journey*, a short film created by students from La Passerelle Film School, which explores the impact of social media on young people. The film's success extended beyond Jersey, receiving a nomination from UK Film School. Following the screening, a Q&A session with the film's student producers provided further insight into the creative process and the issues the film sought to highlight.

Art Projects

YAG members collaborated on two significant art projects:

- **Children's Human Rights Canvas** – A visual representation of the concerns and experiences of young people in Jersey, illustrating key rights and challenges.
- **Tree of Change** – An interactive piece inviting attendees to write commitments toward improving children's rights. The handwritten responses overwhelmingly emphasised the importance of listening to children, ensuring inclusivity, and enhancing education.

Social media and media takeover

To amplify the event's reach, young people took charge of social media content creation, particularly on TikTok. Additionally, BBC Jersey journalists trained YAG members for a media takeover, enabling them to report on the event through television and radio.

More broadly, the event received extensive local coverage through print, radio and social media, amplifying its key messages. The success of *Together@10* has set a strong precedent for future engagement, with the OCCJ committing to hosting another child-led event for World Children's Day 2025.

Youth engagement strategies

When planning began for the *Together@10* event in March 2024, the OCCJ devised a two-part strategy to recruit additional children and young people to work alongside its existing Youth Advisory Group (YAG) in the design and delivery of the event.

Firstly, YAG members scripted and voiced a radio advert for Channel 103, which aired for two weeks, calling for young people to come and join the discussion about children's human rights and air their views on the issues that mattered most to them.

Secondly, the OCCJ devised an advertising campaign, with the same call to action, which ran for six weeks as a series of colourful posters on some of the Island's major bus routes, including two of the most frequently used school buses.

Neither one of these campaigns resulted in any direct contacts with the OCCJ, which was both unexpected and disappointing, and has provided an opportunity to reflect on what future tactics might be more effective.

Jersey Family Justice Council (JFJC)

Established in 2024, the Jersey Family Justice Council (JFJC) has the stated aim of 'bringing together the most senior leaders working in the family justice system, government and other stakeholders to improve the experience of children involved in or impacted by the administration of family justice'.

At the first meeting of the JFJC, the Children's Commissioner raised the issue of consultation with children and how it might play a significant part in the ongoing work of the JFJC. This suggestion was supported by many of those present, resulting in the establishment of a Working Group on Children's Voice, which includes the Children's Commissioner. The Group held three meetings in 2024, with a view to establishing a framework and action plan for consultation with children who have experienced either private or public family law proceedings.

3. PROTECTING CHILDREN’S RIGHTS

Every year the OCCJ receives requests for information and advice in cases where either a child themselves or an adult is concerned that a child’s rights have not been upheld. In all cases we offer advice and information, while some complex cases need further attention and longer involvement.

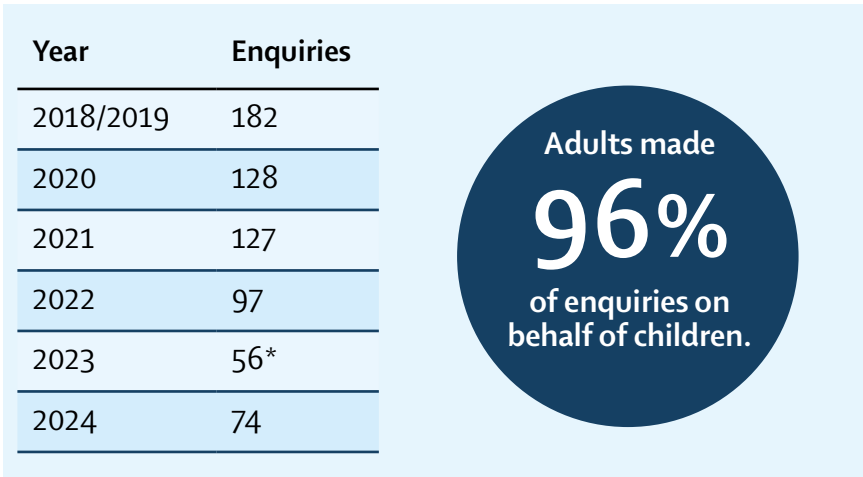
Advice and Information overview

In 2024, the Office of the Children’s Commissioner (OCCJ) continued to provide advice and guidance to children, young people, parents, carers, and professionals on children’s rights. This included supporting families in understanding and navigating formal complaints and resolution processes.

During the year, the OCCJ received 74 enquires. Many of these were one-off contacts where information or advice was provided, while some reflect more sustained contact and action by the OCCJ. In some instances, more than one enquiry was raised in relation to the same child. There has been a reduction in the number of enquiries from previous years. This trend reflects the experience of Children’s Commissioners’ offices across the UK, as they mature and children’s rights approaches become more embedded in their jurisdictions.

Advice and Information enquiries

Advice and Information enquiries between 2018 and 2024



Most enquiries were made by adults – parents, family members, carers, professionals or other concerned adults – on behalf of a child. Children and young people themselves made 4% of direct enquiries. This distribution is comparable to other jurisdictions.

For the OCCJ, the top three areas of concern raised through our Advice and Information Service in 2024 were:

- Children’s Social Care
- Education
- Interactions with the police and youth justice system

Other issues raised included housing, work, private family law, income support, mental health and safeguarding. More detail of specific issues raised with us are shown in the table below.

Children's Social Care	Leaving care entitlements, use of secure care, fostering and adoption, family contact in care, off-Island placements, complex needs, residential care.
Education	Financial assistance for education, inclusion, SEND, social and emotional mental health in schools, reduced timetables, exclusions, public examinations, bullying.
Police and Youth Justice	Remand to Greenfields, youth detention.
Housing	Social housing access, affordability, residential status, tenancy issues.
Income Support	Entitlement to maternity grants, housing components, disability support payments, required work hours and impact on childcare.
Private Family Law	Voice of the child in proceedings, interjurisdictional separation, access to legal aid, child contact arrangements.

Secure accommodation

The deprivation of a child's liberty is one of the most serious measures that can potentially impact the achievement of their human rights. As such, the OCCJ pays particular attention to children in these circumstances. Greenfields is Jersey's only secure children's home, accommodating children for welfare and youth justice reasons. The OCCJ is notified whenever a child is admitted to Greenfields.

In 2024, the OCCJ received 14 notifications of secure placements, with a small number of children being placed in Greenfields on more than one occasion. The pattern of admissions shifted throughout the year, with placements earlier in the year being predominantly for welfare reasons, whereas later in the year, they were predominantly for youth justice cases. Demand for places significantly increased in

the last quarter of 2024, resulting in the facility increasing its registered capacity from three to six places by the end of the year. The OCCJ was made aware that HMP La Moye and the UK secure estate may be used if additional places were required while Greenfields was at full capacity. The OCCJ expressed serious concerns regarding the implications for the human rights of children who might find themselves in these alternative settings.

Over the course of the year, the OCCJ made nine visits to Greenfields, including two by the Commissioner. Some of these involved checks on individual children, some were to meet with staff and be available to meet with children, should they want to. One visit was part of the OCCJ's consultation process for the Strategic Plan 2024-2027.

Off-Island placements

The OCCJ's remit includes the promotion and protection of the rights of children who are placed off-Island for their care or treatment. Throughout 2024, the Office was notified by carers, parents and Government officials of applications for off-Island placements for children.

In 2024, the OCCJ made one visit to a child placed off-Island to ensure their rights were being upheld. This is in addition to legal representation, supported by the OCCJ, provided to the child through a UK-based lawyer.

This theme of off-Island placements was also addressed through the OCCJ's policy and legislative work.

Both the Commissioner and Senior Policy Officer were engaged in ongoing discussions with the Government of Jersey throughout the year as to how the legislative, policy and practice frameworks could be strengthened to ensure that the legal status of children in off-Island placements is clear and that their rights are properly considered and fulfilled in the planning and delivery of their care whilst outside of Jersey. This issue was raised by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its Concluding Observations in 2023, in which it recommended that Jersey develops a legislative framework for ensuring a child rights-based approach to the support of children in off-Island placements and that such placements take place only as a measure of last resort.

The OCCJ provided advice to the Government of Jersey as to proposed legislative provisions required in the UK regarding reciprocal recognition of recovery orders in England and Wales. The OCCJ welcomed these developments and recognised that these measures form an important part of the legislative framework; however, the Office clarified that further consideration should be given to strengthening the domestic legal framework and procedures in this space, and it will continue to advocate for this in 2025.

Strategic litigation toolkit

Following on from joint work with the University of Nottingham Human Rights Law Centre in 2023, the OCCJ foresaw the completion of a strategic litigation toolkit as a scheduled piece of work for 2024. In summary, the purpose of developing a strategic litigation toolkit is to guide practitioners in using legal action to drive systemic change. Such a toolkit provides guidance on case selection, advocacy, community engagement and follow-up, and aims to support litigation as a tool to influence public discourse, reform policy, and achieve long-term human rights outcomes.

However, with the arrival of a new Children's Commissioner and the subsequent development of a new four-year strategic plan in 2024, strategic litigation became less of a priority focus, although it remains one of the powers available to the OCCJ, should it be necessary. It was not considered necessary to press on and develop a toolkit for wider publication; however, following a meeting with the University of Nottingham Human Rights Law Centre in December 2024, content for the toolkit was agreed and the OCCJ undertook to trial it, where applicable, internally in the first instance. Subsequent to this, the OCCJ will make this more widely available in the future.

4. MONITORING AND ADVISING GOVERNMENT

As an independent human rights institution, one of the OCCJ's main functions is to monitor how well children's and young people's rights are respected and protected in Jersey. We do this by holding different organisations, including the Government, to account for how their services, policies, regulations and laws operate for children and young people.

Throughout 2024, the OCCJ was actively engaged in providing expert advice and feedback on a range of legislative and policy initiatives in the Island. The Office's contributions have been instrumental in shaping and refining policy and propositions from a child rights perspective. Much of our work and correspondence to influence policy and legislation goes on behind the scenes and involves multiple meetings with Ministers, Government officials and other stakeholders. Often, the OCCJ's policy work results in written submissions and formal advice on issues. There are some examples from 2024 in this section, as well as a selection of other issues on which advice was given in a less formal capacity.

Draft Mental Health (Young Offenders) Law (Jersey) Amendment Regulations 202-

These draft regulations sought to amend Article 69 of the Mental Health (Jersey) Law 2016 to enable children who are serving a sentence of youth detention in secure accommodation to access acute in-patient mental health treatment in an approved establishment in a timely or urgent manner.

The OCCJ provided written advice on this amendment, both to Government when they consulted the Office, and in the form of a submission to the Children, Education and Home Affairs (CEHA) Scrutiny Panel. The OCCJ's overarching concern was that the law applies to children and adults in the same way, which is not appropriate from a children's rights perspective. The Office also raised a number of specific concerns in relation to this article of the Mental Health (Jersey) Law 2016, including: concerns around the duration of periods of detention; the lack of requirement to regularly review the need for detention; the fact that children were still being detained in adult in-patient mental health facilities; and the lack of clarity on how a child can challenge or appeal their detention.

Given the circumstances at the time of the proposed amendment, the OCCJ agreed to support the amendment on the understanding that this would be an interim measure to meet the needs of children who were securely accommodated at the time, until more robust provisions could be brought forward in the second tranche of changes to the Mental Health (Jersey) Law 2016, due in early 2025, thereby addressing the concerns of the Office.

Draft Children and Young People (Independent Advocates) (Jersey) Regulations 202-

These draft regulations aimed to establish statutory independent advocacy services for vulnerable children and young people, ensuring their voices are heard in decisions affecting their lives. Independent advocacy plays a vital role in enabling meaningful representation and participation in the decision-making of children, young people and their families, and provides a mechanism to hold services to account. It is an important mechanism in the protection and promotion of a child's right to be heard, under Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The OCCJ submitted a written response to the consultation on the regulations and made several recommendations, a number of which were accepted by the Minister for Children and Families in his consultation response report.

Draft Regulation of Care (Amendments) (Jersey) Law 202-

The Draft Regulation of Care (Amendments) Law updates the existing law to widen the remit of the Jersey Care Commission to regulate and inspect hospital, mental health and ambulance services in Jersey. It also proposed strengthening existing regulations or introducing new legal provisions which would better protect the rights of service users.

The OCCJ submitted a written response to the consultation on the draft amendments and, in the main, welcomed the proposed changes. The Office also made some recommendations as to how the provisions around access to visitors, and access to care and health records by representatives of a service user, could be further strengthened. These were: to introduce a more objective test in deciding whether to restrict access in these areas; and, where a decision to restrict access is made, a registered person must then be required to consult with the service user in determining their actions, inform the service user of their decision and their reason for it, and maintain accurate records of both of the above.

The OCCJ's recommendations were accepted by the Minister for Environment in his consultation response report.

Overnight detention of children

The OCCJ has been engaged in ongoing policy discussions with the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs and the Minister for Children and Families with the aim of reducing the use of overnight detention of children in police custody, whilst awaiting a first court appearance. A number of proposed amendments to the law have been agreed which will strengthen the legal framework in this area. The amendments should be brought to the States Assembly for debate in early 2025.

Other issues on which the OCCJ also provided advice:

- Proposition P28/2024: Youth Service Provision
- The Government of Jersey's draft Youth Justice Strategy
- Reciprocal care arrangements for off-Island placements
- Draft Remission and Temporary Release Legislation
- A submission to the CEHA Scrutiny panel on the draft GoJ Budget

5. PROGRESSING INCORPORATION OF THE UNCRC

The Government of Jersey has committed to gradually incorporating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Jersey law. This is an important commitment and one that the OCCJ is keen to see progress on. It involves both proactive and reactive work by the Office.

Before describing the OCCJ's efforts to work against this strategic objective, we need to first understand what is meant by 'incorporation of the UNCRC'. Simply put, this term describes the embedding of the Convention's principles into Jersey law, either directly (making it legally enforceable) or indirectly (requiring authorities to consider children's rights in policymaking and decision-making processes).

While both approaches share the same fundamental aim, they differ in terms of the degree of interpretation they allow and the legal recourse they offer to individuals.

Direct incorporation integrates the UNCRC's provisions into domestic legislation, making them legally enforceable in national courts. This allows individuals to invoke UNCRC rights directly in legal proceedings. Countries like Norway and Spain have adopted this method, granting the UNCRC significant legal authority within their jurisdictions.

Indirect incorporation involves aligning national laws and policies with the principles of the UNCRC without making the Convention itself part of domestic law. It may include obligations for public authorities to consider children's rights in decision-making processes. An example of this would be child rights impact assessments, which were introduced by the Government of Jersey at the beginning of 2024 (see p18).

Children's Rights Impact Assessments (CRIAs)

A total of 155 CRIAs were completed by Government during 2024 on a diverse range of subjects, from modern languages in schools through to the legalisation of cannabis. On several occasions, officials have sought assistance from the OCCJ when approaching the task of completing a CRIA, and the Office continues to offer that support as the practice becomes embedded in the culture of the public sector.

What is a CRIA?

In January 2024, the Government of Jersey introduced mandatory child rights impact assessments (CRIAs) for all legislators and policymakers in the Island. A CRIA is a report that needs to accompany any new piece of policy or legislation, setting out what the potential impact of that policy or law might be on the rights of Jersey's children.

Despite the fact that they are among the main recipients and beneficiaries of government services, children have traditionally been largely invisible in the process of public decision-making. Children are among those with the least political power, making them especially vulnerable to poor decision-making by the governments and adults on whom they depend.

The fact that Jersey included a provision for mandatory CRIAs in the Children (Convention Rights) (Jersey) Law places the Island at the forefront of a growing international community of governments that are taking concrete action to ensure that major policies and legislative decisions do not adversely affect children, either directly or indirectly.

If the mission statement of the Children (Convention Rights) (Jersey) Law is to act on the 'principal ambition to achieve significant culture change in relation to the policies, laws and day-to-day practices which affect Jersey's children', then the CRIA is, to date, its most significant delivery mechanism.

CRIA Case Study

In May, a proposition was lodged seeking to decriminalise the personal use of cannabis for people over the age of 18. Given the nature of the proposition, the OCCJ reviewed it and the corresponding CRIA. This caused the OCCJ some concern in relation to children's rights and the potential of creating what is called a 'status offence'. This is when something is deemed to be legal for one portion of the population and illegal for another, not by virtue of the action itself, but based on a particular personal characteristic (in this case, age). Status offences mainly apply to children. The OCCJ wrote to the Deputy who had lodged the proposition and asked if they would meet with the OCCJ's Senior Policy Officer to discuss these concerns. A meeting was arranged, at which recommendations were made as to how the proposition and the CRIA could be amended to mitigate the negative impact on children's rights. The OCCJ was happy to see that those recommendations were incorporated into the final draft of the proposition and CRIA.

Measuring the Island's progress

Aside from the OCCJ's regular engagement with UN treaty bodies and representative organisations at an international level (see p20), it is also necessary for the Office to have clear, Jersey-specific guidelines or benchmarks against which it can measure compliance with the UNCRC and other human rights treaties.

In 2024, our primary benchmarks when providing advice to Government were the Concluding Observations of United Nations treaty bodies (see p21 What are Concluding Observations?) and the [Legislative Gap Analysis \(LGA\)](#) – a comprehensive, independent analysis of the extent to which Jersey legislation complies with the UNCRC.

For example, the OCCJ drew on both the LGA and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's 2023 Concluding Observations in a submission to Scrutiny about an amendment to the Mental Health (Jersey) Law 2016 (see p16). References to the LGA and the 2023 Concluding Observations also featured in the OCCJ's feedback to Government on the draft Youth Justice Strategy (see p28), highlighting matters such as the need to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility (see p21, What is MACR?) and ensuring that children's voices are heard throughout their journey through the justice system, including during proceedings.

6. ENGAGING AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

The UNCRC is the most widely ratified international agreement in the world. A consequence of this is that there is a wealth of international knowledge and expertise which Jersey and the OCCJ can draw on, and contribute to, in the pursuit of children's rights. In addition, it is essential that the OCCJ continues to participate in the relevant international human rights systems, including in the treaties reporting mechanisms, as a means of holding the Government of Jersey to account. Engaging with these international bodies, and monitoring developments internationally, are crucial parts the OCCJ's policy work which, in turn, allows the Office to advise and influence the work of Government officials.

European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC)

The theme for ENOC's (see box What is ENOC?) work in 2024 was the protection and promotion of the rights of children in alternative care. The OCCJ's Senior Policy officer was an active member of the ENOC Working Group that developed research on this theme, collaborating with academics from the Tampere University in Finland to survey member states on legal, policy and practice frameworks. This work informed ENOC's Position Statement on Alternative Care, published at the conclusion of the ENOC 28th Annual Conference in Helsinki in September.

The Commissioner and Senior Policy Officer attended the ENOC conference, where they engaged with experts and young care-experienced advisors from across Europe. Additionally, the OCCJ attended the ENOC Spring Seminar in Tallinn, Estonia, in June, which focussed on alternative care and the rights of children affected by parental imprisonment. The seminar included discussions on implementing the Council of Europe Recommendation on Children of Imprisoned Parents.

While the Office was unable to participate in the European Network of Young Advisors (ENYA) 2024 due to resource constraints, we recognise the value of this initiative in amplifying young people's voices.

The OCCJ hopes to take a more active role in ENYA in the coming years, when themes are relevant to the work of the OCCJ and sufficient resources are available.

What is ENOC?

The European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC) is a not-for-profit association that brings together independent children's rights institutions (ICRIs) from across Europe. Established in 1997 in Trondheim, Norway, with an initial gathering of ten institutions and UNICEF representatives, ENOC has expanded to include 44 institutions (including the Office of the Children's Commissioner Jersey) across 34 countries within the Council of Europe. Its primary mission is to promote and safeguard children's rights, facilitating the full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) throughout the region.

ENOC serves as a collaborative platform for its members, enabling the exchange of information, capacity building, and professional support. The network actively engages in advocacy and policy work to ensure that European-wide bodies prioritise children's rights in their activities, legislation, and policies. A key aspect of ENOC's work is promoting the active participation of children and young people in decision-making processes that affect them, ensuring their voices are heard and respected.

ROCK conference

The OCCJ was invited to present at the 2024 Rights of the Child UK (ROCK) Coalition Conference in Edinburgh. The theme explored how children's rights were being progressed across Scotland, England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Jersey. The OCCJ delivered a presentation on the implementation of the UNCRC Concluding Observations in Jersey, highlighting both the progress made and the actions still required. The OCCJ then took part in a Q&A which involved answering questions submitted by children and young people in Scotland.

British and Irish Network of Ombudsman and Children’s Commissioners (BINOCC)

BINOCC brings together children’s commissioners and ombudsmen from Jersey, Wales, England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. In 2024, the OCCJ attended two formal meetings of BINOCC:

- Edinburgh (February 2024): Discussions focused on UNCRC incorporation into domestic law, strengthening complaints and investigations functions, and consulting with children.
- London (June 2024): The OCCJ met with two Youth Ambassadors from the English Commissioner’s Office, who raised issues such as online safety, climate change, inclusive education and the impact of poverty on children’s health and learning.

These meetings provided valuable insights and facilitated shared learning on key children’s rights issues across jurisdictions.

Contributions to UN and International Reporting

As part of its advocacy work, the OCCJ submitted an alternative report to the UN Human Rights Committee under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The submission urged the UK State Party, including Jersey, to:

- raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR) from 10 to 14, in line with international standards;
- develop and publish a Youth Justice Strategy for Jersey.

The Human Rights Committee’s Concluding Observations reflected the OCCJ’s concerns, recommending that Jersey raise the MACR. Following this, the OCCJ wrote to the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs and the Minister for Children and Families to highlight these recommendations.

The Minister for Justice and Home Affairs subsequently requested that a review of the MACR be included in the proposed draft of the Government’s Youth Justice Strategy.

What are Concluding Observations?

A UN Concluding Observation is a formal assessment issued by a United Nations treaty body after reviewing a country’s compliance with an international human rights treaty. It includes commendations, concerns and recommendations for improvement. States are expected to address these observations to enhance their adherence to human rights standards.

In the context of children’s rights, the main treaty body is the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC reviews tranches of countries in rotation, to make its workload manageable. Following the most recent review of the UK State Party (which includes Jersey), the CRC published its Concluding Observations in 2023, highlighting some progress made in fulfilling the obligations of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as some areas of concern. And while all the recommendations the CRC makes are noteworthy and of direct relevance to the ongoing work to strengthen children’s rights protections, it is of particular interest that it issued two Concluding Observations that specifically referenced Jersey.

What is MACR?

The minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR) is the lowest age at which a person can be legally prosecuted and held responsible for a crime. Below this age, children are considered incapable of understanding their actions’ consequences.

There is a range of MACRs within Europe. Examples of some of the variations are:

Country	MACR (yrs)
England, Wales, N Ireland and Jersey	10
Scotland	12
Sweden, Finland, Norway	15
Denmark	15
Germany	14
France	13
Spain, Italy	14
Netherlands	12

7. BEING AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT INDEPENDENT HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTION IN JERSEY

As Jersey's only human rights institution, the OCCJ is independent of Government but accountable to the States Assembly and to the public. It is important that the Office is effective, efficient and accountable, and that its internal processes support this. It is also important that the OCCJ continues to grow its knowledge and skills to deliver on its functions.

In 2024, the Office of the Children's Commissioner for Jersey (OCCJ) undertook significant initiatives to enhance institutional effectiveness, focusing on governance, internal processes, data protection, staff development and stakeholder engagement.

Internal Process Improvements

In its commitment to continuous improvement, the OCCJ implemented several internal process enhancements:

- **New monthly activity reports:** The OCCJ introduced a system of monthly reporting on key activities and projects for all staff. While the Office had traditionally maintained a register of engagements (meetings, seminars, conferences attended, and so on), it did not readily capture the richness of the day-to-day work that the office undertakes. To provide a fuller record of the work of the office, Monthly Activity Reports were introduced in April 2024.
- **Strengthened procurement policies:** The OCCJ introduced more robust procurement checks and protocols, in line with States of Jersey best practice, to enhance financial transparency. In addition, the Government of Jersey's Procurement Best Practice and Procedures User Guide and Toolkit has been employed, with further advice, when necessary, from Commercial Services on tendering processes. While applied previously, the processes for procurement were reinforced in 2024.
- **Improved staff performance review and appraisal system:** While the OCCJ had previously used an internal performance management template, this practice had lessened in recent years. A new Performance Management and Development Form was introduced in 2024, focussing on: key areas of work; tasks associated with these; progress or the reasons for lack of this; staff understanding of their role and views on the OCCJ's performance; and staff training and development.

Data Protection Review

Recognising the paramount importance of safeguarding sensitive information, the OCCJ initiated a comprehensive review of its data protection policies and procedures at the end of 2024. This initiative aims to ensure full compliance with statutory obligations and the robust protection of all data collected and maintained. The review is set to continue into early 2025, encompassing updates to existing protocols and the delivery of comprehensive training sessions to all staff members.

Staff Training and Development

Professional development remained a cornerstone of the OCCJ's institutional effectiveness strategy. Staff members participated in a range of training sessions and webinars aligned with the Office's strategic priorities:

- **Children's Rights Impact Assessments (CRIA):** Staff attended webinars hosted by Public Law Wales and the Children's Legal Centre Wales, focusing on the Welsh Children's Measure and the application of CRIA in policy development.
- **Digital participation:** Staff attended a series of interactive sessions run by the Participation People, which focussed on the best methods of seeking meaningful participation from children and young people in the OCCJ's work programme. The sessions were jointly led by the Participation People's young advisors.
- **Impact of School Absence:** The Nuffield Foundation's session provided insights into the long-term effects of school absenteeism on child development and educational outcomes.

- **International Human Rights Frameworks:** Engagements with the Human Rights Consortium Scotland offered deeper understanding of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and its implications for children's welfare.
- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and Access to Justice:** The Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures at the University of Strathclyde facilitated discussions on SDG 16, emphasising the importance of equitable access to justice for children.
- **Domestic Abuse and the Courts:** An in-person training session equipped staff with the latest methodologies and legal frameworks to support children affected by domestic abuse within the judicial system.

Office relocation

While the premises at Brunel House had served the OCCJ for several years, it was a less-than-ideal home for several reasons. Principal among these was the lack of disability access and facilities for children and adults. For a human rights institution that takes non-discrimination values seriously, this was concerning. The premises also lacked other facilities, such as meeting rooms. In addition, with a small staff of eight being spread across two floors, the premises did not lend itself to strong team cohesion.

On both a strategic and operational level, it is essential for the proper functioning of the OCCJ that its independence from Government interference and influence is clear. This meant that it would have been inappropriate for the OCCJ to move into the new Government of Jersey premises on Union Street. It also meant that, as the Union Street premises were a very prominent neighbour of the OCCJ's Brunel House premises, relocation became an even more pressing priority.

In June 2024, the OCCJ began looking for more suitable premises, with the help of an estate agent. Having identified a suitable space, and with support from Government of Jersey Commercial Services and Jersey Property Holdings, the OCCJ tendered for the refurbishment of the space, and this work began in October 2024. A new tenant for Brunel House was also secured.

The OCCJ's new office will be on the second floor of **13 Broad Street** and will allow for full disability access, provide meeting rooms and offer a much more team-friendly working space.



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Advisory panels

The OCCJ has three statutory advisory panels: the Adult Advisory Panel; The Audit and Risk Advisory Panel; and the Youth Advisory Panel (see p11).

Audit and Risk Advisory Panel (ARAP)

In accordance with the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Jersey) Law 2019, the role of this panel is to 'provide the Commissioner with advice and assistance in relation to... the use of resources by the office, the management of risk by the office, and the governance of the office.'

For the 2024 ARAP Non-Executive Members' Report, see p30 Appendix 2.

ARAP met on five occasions during 2024. The main topics addressed were:

- the updating of the format and content of the OCCJ's risk register, to include inherent risk and risk appetite, in addition to residual risk and risk trend;
- the terms of reference for the Panel, which were updated in consultation with the Chief Minister, as required and agreed with the Panel ([see here](#));
- budget constraints and internal accounting processes;
- a self-assessment tool for Panel members to ensure that the Panel and the OCCJ are acting in line with their purpose and terms of reference;
- review and updating of OCCJ policies in line with statutory requirements and best practice.

In addition, one member of ARAP sat on the steering group overseeing a proposed restructure of the OCCJ.

Adult Advisory Panel (AAP)

In accordance with the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Jersey) Law 2019, the role of this panel is to 'provide the Commissioner with advice and assistance relating to the discharge of his or her functions generally.'

As with the ARAP above, a review of the terms of reference for the AAP was also undertaken in 2024. The updated terms of reference can be found [here](#). At the start of 2024, there were six members of the AAP. During the year, two of these members stood down due to work commitments. In addition, following a review and update of the terms of reference, two further members stood down due to having served two three-year terms. This left the AAP with just two members at the end of the year.

It was resolved that the AAP's future membership would be addressed in early 2025, with a recruitment process seeking expressions of interest via the OCCJ's website and through targeted approaches to appropriate institutions and individuals.

The AAP is important in ensuring that the OCCJ has access to a wide range of expertise from Jersey and beyond. In 2024, the advice of the Panel was sought on matters such as:

- the functioning of the Panel and its input to the work of the office;
- individual publications, including the priorities for the Strategic Plan 2024-2027 and the development of an implementation plan for this;
- relevant research and activities in the human rights field, both in Jersey and other parts of the United Kingdom.

In addition, one member of AAP sat on the steering group overseeing a proposed restructure of the OCCJ.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE AND RISK

The end-of-year accounts for 2024 are provided in Appendix 1. These show an underspend of £39,381. It was anticipated that this could be accrued towards relocation and renovation costs, but this was not the case.

The OCCJ's greatest and most important resource is its staff, and consequently, staff costs (salaries, social security, pension contributions, and so on) account for most of the Office's expenditure. Having properly qualified and experienced staff is vital if the OCCJ is to provide a high-quality service to the Island's children, whether through casework, influencing policy and law, direct engagement with children through YAG and school visits, sourcing the best possible advice from our advisory panels and other external experts or raising Jersey's profile in the international human rights space.

Risk

Insufficient resources to effectively deliver on its statutory remit and duties is the highest risk to the OCCJ. A range of additional risks to the operation and success of the Office are impacted by the financial risk but are broader in scope. At the end of 2024, a number of these risks remained high, with risk scores of 4, even after actions were taken by the OCCJ to reduce them. These risks, which will remain high until the Office can be assured that progress is being made in addressing them, are set out in the following table.

MOST SIGNIFICANT RISKS OF 2024

Risk 	Initial Risk	Actions to Address the Risk 2024	Adjusted Risk	Planned Actions 2025 
Insufficient resourcing to deliver on the statutory functions and duties of the Office due to cuts in the OCCJ budget from 2025 onwards.	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Commissioner has raised, and will continue to raise, this risk both in writing and in person, with the Minister for Children, the Accounting Office in SPPP and the Government of Jersey CEO. The OCCJ will continue to seek economies of scale and cost-saving measures, such as online panel meetings, as opposed to in-person meetings. The OCCJ will exercise its ability to draw down additional funds from the Government of Jersey for specific actions, if necessary. 	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All mitigating actions to be continued. Submission of a business case for 2026, if accepted by Government.
The purpose, functions and objectives of the OCCJ are not clearly understood by relevant stakeholders. The Office has inadequate connections and networks to promote this and to build positive relationships with Government and non-Government stakeholders.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish an annual report and strategic plan with our purpose and functions clearly stated. The Commissioner and her staff have worked, and will continue to work to build relevant and more constructive relationships. We will provide clear information on our website and continue to improve this. We will have a clear communication strategy that addresses the information needs of different stakeholders. 	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will update our communications strategy. We will look to increase children's inputs on our website. We will update the general information on the website.
Children, and adults who work with and for them, are unaware of their right to seek information and advice from us, as well as being able to raise complaints with the office.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have added child-friendly information on our Advice and Information service to our website. 	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will provide information to key organisations to include in their communications/publications We will undertake a social media campaign to targeted at Children and Young People (C&YP) and those who work with them. We will put our complaints process on our website. We will continue to build and strengthen our relationships with stakeholders.
OCCJ cannot recruit and retain appropriately trained and skilled staff because there is a limited pool of people in Jersey with relevant experience as well as limited training available. In addition, Government budget cuts and recruitment freeze will make this more challenging.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff are provided with relevant training opportunities where needed and available. We seek expert advice and services where necessary and appropriate. Ongoing CPD is included in staff performance reviews and opportunities for training and learning provided. Establishment of relevant Advisory Panels to assist in areas where internal expertise or capacity is limited. The Children's Commissioner is very experienced in children's rights, academically and practically. We provide Children's Rights Approach training to professionals to increase awareness, capacity and interest in the field in Jersey. 	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A detailed induction process for new staff to be developed.
A lack of clarity and understanding of children's and human rights and the OCCJ leads to negative attitudes and barriers and challenges to achieving our goals.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have a Communications strategy in place to promote positive messages and accurate information. We deliver Children's Rights Approach Training. We are building constructive relationships with departments and agencies. We are members of various inter-agency groups where we can promote accurate and positive understanding of human rights. 	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All actions to be continued.
The OCCJ has a hosting arrangement with Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance (SPPP) under the Cabinet Office. There is the potential for Ministers and Duty Bearers to misunderstand or fail to fully appreciate the independent status of the OCCJ. Because the OCCJ is funded by Government and outsources some of its administrative functions to the Government (finance and HR) it may not appear independent.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our relationship with SPPP is clearly set out in a Framework Agreement and supported by quarterly meetings. OCCJ clear on its independent status with SPPP and the GOJ. Positive and appropriate relationship with SPPP Accounting Officer. The Audit and Risk Advisory Panel is established and oversees our independent financial and governance framework. There are clear financial audit trails in place. The OCCJ is transparent about its independence and reinforces this and its accountability to States Assembly and Scrutiny Panels. 	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the pros and cons of full independent status over 2024-2025 with our advisory panels and BINOCC colleagues.

COMMISSIONER'S RECOMMENDATIONS 2024

Recommendations made to the Government are the result of research and analysis carried out by the Commissioner and the OCCJ staff. This work constitutes a considerable proportion of the Office's 'business as usual' activity in any given year, and can sometimes be complex, time-consuming, ongoing over a period of time and involve many meetings with stakeholders.

The OCCJ made the following recommendations in relation to the **draft Youth Justice Strategy**:

- The strategy should include more explicit reference to hearing the views of children and young people throughout.
- The strategy should include a commitment to a greater level of legislative reform to address the gaps raised by the Legislative Gap Analysis.
- The action on minimum of age of criminal responsibility (MACR) should be strengthened with consideration given to raising the MACR to 14 in line with international human rights standards and recent Concluding Observations from both the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Human Rights Committee.

As part of the **CEHA Scrutiny Panel's review of the Government's Proposed Budget 2025-2028**, the OCCJ recommended that the Panel question the Minister about:

- the short- and long-term impacts of the proposed cuts on both existing and forthcoming strategies and plans, including:
 - the transformation and improvement plan for Children's Social Care
 - the implementation of the Inclusion Review recommendations
 - the Youth Justice Strategy
- the impact of the proposed cuts on the ability of the OCCJ to deliver its statutory duties and functions, and how this complies with the legal duty on the States to ensure adequate resourcing of the OCCJ.

In relation to the **Draft Children and Young People (Independent Advocates) (Jersey) Regulations 202-**, the OCCJ recommended:

- An amendment to the definition of the term 'advocacy service provider' to provide more clarity.
- An amendment to make the development of a code of practice a requirement, rather than discretionary.
- That the code of practice, or other practice guidance, provides for the arrangements for ensuring that qualifying people are aware of the availability of independent advocacy services.
- That the Minister periodically reviews the arrangements for ensuring qualifying people are aware of the availability of independent advocacy services.
- That consideration is given to tightening the criteria regarding eligibility for appointment as an independent advocate (Regulation 5, paragraph (g)), to ensure that a person has to be independent of the administration of the States in its entirety, rather than simply those areas that fall under the ambit of the Minister for Children and Families, in order to safeguard the independence of any advocacy services.

In relation to proposed restrictions on access to visitors and records under the **Draft Regulation of Care (Amendments) (Jersey) Law 202-**, the OCCJ made the following recommendations:

- The provisions should be amended to include some reasonableness parameters and provide for the grounds under which such restrictive decisions are permitted.
- Where a decision is made by a registered person to restrict access under these proposed regulations, the draft law should make provision to require a registered person to consult with the service user in determining their actions, inform the service user of their decision and their reason for it, and maintain accurate records of both of the above.

Regarding **P.31/2024 Cannabis: Decriminalisation of personal possession and recreational use**, the OCCJ recommended that the proposition be amended to:

- ensure that no status offence is created for children regarding the personal use or possession of cannabis;
- include a requirement on Government to bring forward, alongside legislation, the measures to mitigate the negative indirect impacts on children identified in the CRIA, with specific attention paid in this regard to those vulnerable children for whom negative impacts may be most severe.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025

The OCCJ has identified a range of activities for 2025.

Key among these are:

- Restructure the OCCJ with a view to more efficiently meeting demand on the various offerings of the Office.
- Continue to visit the Island's schools to raise awareness of children's human rights.
- Clarify and publish our advice and information processes.
- Review and reshape our children's rights education offering for professionals.
- Redesign our website to improve our provision of key human rights information to children and adults.
- Make a submission to the UN Committee on the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights.
- Recruit new members to our Adult Advisory Panel and draw on their experience and expertise in informing our work.
- Work with our Youth Advisory Group to design, plan and implement an event to mark World Children's Day.
- Maintain a watching brief on Government activities in relation to our thematic priorities and engage both pro-actively and reactively as appropriate.

"I know that there is much more to learn, and I am looking forward to meeting and talking to children, adults, professionals, organisations, and the Government, each of whom have a role in making children's and young people's rights a reality."

Dr Carmel Corrigan

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Non-Staff and Staff Expenditure 2024

Non-staff expenditure	£
Office lease or rent	£62,458.00
Transportation, storage and mail	£4,818.00
Business and management admin services	£1,277.00
Cleaning and waste services and supplies	£9,414.00
Education and training services and supplies	£4,638.00
Office equipment, supplies and services	£6,780.00
Utilities including electricity, phones and water	£6,493.00
Professional subscriptions and memberships	£12,263.00
Editorial, design and publications	£20,374.00
Legal services	£42,405.00
Commissioned services	£89,111.00
Real estate services	£26,670.00
Food and beverage, including events	£5,142.00
Building maintenance and repair	£3,585.00
Technology and engineering services	£36,697.00
Travel and accommodation and entertainment (staff and advisory panels)	£13,322.00
Sundries	£684.00
Total non-staff expenditure	£346,131.00
Staff costs	
Civil service - basic	£514,443.00
Additional payments	£72.00
Sickness	-£266.00
Social security	£29,049.00
Pensions	£82,238.00
Other	£3,000.00
Total staff costs	£628,536.00
Total expenditure	£974,667.00

Appendix 2

ARAP Non-Executive Members' Report

The Audit and Risk Advisory Panel (ARAP) is appointed by the Children's Commissioner as required by the 2019 Law governing the Commissioner's Office. The panel currently comprises four members and its role is to advise on the management and governance of the Office. Specifically, ARAP provides the Commissioner with advice and assistance in relation to:

- The management of risk by the Office;
- The governance of the Office; and
- The use of resources by the Office.

The panel is not remunerated and does not act in an executive or managerial capacity.

2024 has been a significant year of change, with the Acting Commissioner Andrea Le Saint standing down from the role due to the appointment of the new permanent Commissioner Dr Carmel Corrigan, who took up the post in March 2024 following a robust recruitment process, including an interview by a panel of young people. The Panel would like to thank Andrea, for the key role she played ensuring a smooth transition between permanent appointments and her positive contribution.

Dr Corrigan joins the Office from her most recent role as Head of Participation and Rights Education at the Ombudsman for Children's Office in Ireland and we welcome her to the six-year role and are delighted to be working with someone of her calibre.

During the year, ARAP met five times. Three regular oversight meetings and two risk review meetings were held with the Commissioner. A separate meeting was also held with the Government's Finance Business Partner, to consider finances.

During 2024 a key area of focus was the review and management of risks facing the Office, ensuring concentration is given to the highest risks but that the direction of travel of overall risks are monitored, new or transitional risks are captured and clear mitigation measures are implemented to reduce the risks faced. ARAP finally looked at residual risks remaining with consideration, in line with appetite, of how to address these.

ARAP also took the opportunity to review its terms of reference and made minor changes, while still adhering to legislative requirements.

The Panel gave input into discussion regarding the impact of 2025 and future budget cuts to the Government's funding to the Office. ARAP has raised concerns, shared with the Commissioner, regarding the Office's ability to fulfil its wide range of functions with ongoing budgetary cuts.

The Panel would like to record its thanks both to the Commissioner and also the wider OCCJ staff team, who work so diligently and with great care.

Appendix 3

Operational & Financial Capability Assessment

The Operational & Financial Capability Assessment for the OCCJ can be found [here](#).



For further resources and information on all aspects of our work and on child rights more generally, visit our [website](#) or follow us on social media.



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