



Children's Commissioner for Jersey

Promoting and Protecting Children's Rights

P.80/2022 (Draft Mini-Budget 2022)

18 August 2022

Dear Chairman

I am pleased to note that your Panel is undertaking a review of P.80/2022 (Draft Mini-Budget 2022). I await the findings with interest.

As you may be aware, the Office of the Children's Commissioner has completed several projects over the past two years which have highlighted a number of obstacles in children's lives. These themes have been widely publicised by us, in our mission to give a voice to the children of the Island, and I note that a number of them have also been highlighted in the measures proposed in the Draft Mini-Budget.

In particular, the outlined plans to increase income tax allowances (as well as benefits) and reduce social security contributions seem to indicate that the new Government is aware of the increased financial stress that many lower-income families are under in the wake of the recent pandemic. This reflects evidence that we have received, both directly (through casework undertaken by our office, for example) and indirectly (through the reports of family life that we have been given by children and young people, notably in our [Life on the Rock](#) project).

The Draft Mini-Budget's proposed measures to promote a wider uptake of Community Cost Benefits is also very welcome, as our office has been made aware on a number of occasions (and through a variety of channels) that the 'hidden poverty' affecting families in Jersey is on the rise. The increase in access to foodbanks has been a particularly stark example of this, and we have heard many times from children that they worry about the detrimental effects of competing costs in their households – the choice, for instance, between food shopping and visiting the GP is one that has been raised with us both in writing and in our conversations with young people.

On a similar note, the proposed provision of support for families with less than five years' residence also addresses an issue that was highlighted by the previous Children's Commissioner, Deborah McMillan, in her 2021 submission to Scrutiny's Migration and Population Review Panel. In that submission, she spoke about the necessity of ensuring that the human rights of the children of migrant workers are upheld in Jersey, citing Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and various Articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights (UNCRC) of the Child. The proposal to allocate £0.4M to support families who have been in Jersey for less than five years is the first solid move towards addressing those concerns, and is therefore also very welcome.

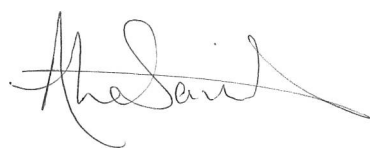


In terms of what further measures could be taken, beyond the scope of this Draft Mini-Budget, I would like to remind you and your Panel members that, in October 2020, our office published a [Legislative Gap Analysis](#) (LGA) for Jersey. This report was the culmination of a year's work and it resulted in the Island's first comprehensive, independent analysis of the extent to which Jersey legislation complies with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). I mention this now because, even more than the evidence that we are currently gathering through our ongoing work with Jersey's children and young people, this document clearly highlights the Jersey laws that continue to fall short of compliance with the UNCRC.

It is important to have a touchstone of this kind, so that we may continue to measure how meaningfully the Government is managing to address the major areas of concern. The recent introduction of Child Rights Impact Assessments, as well as the passing of the Draft Children (Convention Rights) (Jersey) Law, were indications from the previous Government that they had a willingness to progress along the continuum of compliance with the UNCRC.

It is my feeling that a number of the proposals set out in this Draft Mini-Budget show a similar willingness. The protection of children's rights is, of course, everyone's business but it is only the Government that is able to make the necessary legislative and policy changes to facilitate that. Therefore, the proposals highlighted in this submission can be seen, if adopted, as further steps towards a society that values and empowers all children and young people. They should not, however, be seen as conclusive. There is still plenty more to be done – as the LGA makes very clear – which is why we shall be continuing to work with Government and, where necessary, challenge them, as Jersey continues to incorporate the letter and spirit of the UNCRC into its statute and services.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrea Le Saint', written in a cursive style.

Andrea Le Saint
Acting Children's Commissioner for Jersey