

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND HOUSING
ON TUESDAY 30th JUNE 2020**

Children's Day

As Members will recall, the publication of the 2017 report from the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry was a wake-up call for everyone with responsibility for children in care in Jersey.

The report identified individual and systemic failings and gave a voice to all those who suffered abuse. It revealed the true extent to which Jersey institutions failed our children and their families. The subsequent two-year review published by the Care Inquiry Panel in September 2019 showed progress and future challenges in equal measure in our Government Plan to 'put children first'.

Children's Day was one of the recommendations made by a Citizens' Panel – who are a group of islanders who have been working with and advising the Government to help deliver this important act of remembrance and celebration.

One of the eight recommendations of the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry (IJCI) was that Jersey should find a way to acknowledge the children and young people who were failed by the island's child care system. An independent Citizens Panel was commissioned in 2018 to develop proposals to address this recommendation.

I would like to pay tribute to the Citizens' Panel, who have been instrumental in forging links with this day to ensure that children and people who have experienced trauma are not forgotten.

One of their key recommendations is Jersey Children's Day, which the Citizen's Panel say is "a wonderful opportunity to both remember the survivors and victims and provide a focus on children and young people living in the island now."

Through this day, the Citizens' Panel hope people will recognise how vital it is that young people's voices are heard, and their opinions valued by us all.

The Panel also say that "they hope this day will inspire children and adults to try new things and think in new ways leaving a positive footprint for future generations."

The focus of Children's Day 2020, in schools and nurseries, is centred around regeneration and growth.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the arrangements for the inaugural Children's Day, this year, have had to be scaled back. Nonetheless, in recognition of the importance of what will become an annual event, the Government of Jersey, working closely with the Citizens' Panel, has been working on a plan to ensure that 3 July still goes ahead as a day to remember the lessons of the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry and to celebrate the talents and potential of the Island's children and young people.

All schools and nurseries have been invited to choose a tree, which will be planted in their grounds, to celebrate and mark Jersey's first Children's Day on 3rd July 2020. Children and young people have also been invited to take part in a creative tree project to celebrate childhood, using the symbols of roots, growth and blossom through various pieces of work such as posters, poems, artwork, models or song.

As the Minister for Children, I am proud to commemorate this important landmark in our Island's history and will continue to work tirelessly with other Ministers, elected States Members and officers to improve any areas where the Panel remain concerned.

The theme of Children's Day links with the views from children and young people during the recent survey, in which they shared their experiences of the COVID19 lockdown and their hopes for the future.

I would again like to express my sincere gratitude to the thousands of children and young people who took part in our survey and may I take this moment to congratulate every single child and young person in Jersey for the way they accepted, and adapted to, the changes during the Coronavirus crises.

In the blink of an eye, their lives were turned upside down and they were asked to follow rules they have never known and live a life they could never have imagined. They stayed indoors without really understanding why they couldn't go out and see their family and friends.

Yet they accepted these changes with real resilience, courage, hope, and empathy.

And I am sure my fellow Members will agree with just how exceptional our island's children and young people have been throughout the unprecedented period of disruption and I want to take this opportunity to thank our children and young people for helping to play their part in following the health guidelines and for their patience and understanding during the most serious health issue the Island has ever faced.

Thank you to Jersey's children and young people – our unsung heroes.