

# STATES OF JERSEY



## PROPOSED BUDGET (GOVERNMENT PLAN) 2025-2028 (P.51/2024): SEVENTH AMENDMENT

### CONNECT ME FUNDING

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Lodged au Greffe on 8th November 2024  
by Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour  
Earliest date for debate: 26th November 2024

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STATES GREFFE

PROPOSED BUDGET (GOVERNMENT PLAN) 2025-2028 (P.51/2024):  
SEVENTH AMENDMENT

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**1 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (g) –**

after the words “set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Tables 5(i) and (ii) of the Report.” insert the words –

“, except that, in Summary Table 5(i) –

- (i) the Head of Expenditure for the Cabinet Office should be reduced by £86,215; and
- (ii) the Head of Expenditure for Customer and Local Services should be increased by £86,215 to support the funding of the Connect Me project.”

**2 PAGE 4, PARAGRAPH (o) –**

after the words “Appendix to the accompanying Report” insert the words –

“, except that on page 14, after the words “support the ongoing well-being of Islanders”, there should be inserted the following words –

“As part of the prioritisation of community well-being, the Social Security department has allocated £391,215 of funding to the Connect Me project for the year 2025, to ensure the continuation of the project and support the introduction of social prescribing.”.

DEPUTY L.M.C. DOUBLET OF ST. SAVIOUR

**Note:** After this amendment, the proposition would read as follows –

**THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –**

to receive the Government Plan 2025 – 2028 (entitled “Budget 2025-2028”) specified in Article 9(1) of the Public Finances (Jersey) Law 2019 (“the Law”) and specifically –

- (a) to approve the estimate of total States income to be paid into the Consolidated Fund in 2025 as set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 1 to the Report, which is inclusive of the proposed taxation and impôts duties changes outlined in the Government Plan, in line with Article 9(2)(a) of the Law.
- (b) to approve the proposed Changes to Approval for financing/borrowing for 2025, as shown in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 2 to the Report, which may be obtained by the Minister for Treasury and Resources, as and when required, in line with Article 9 (2)(c) of the Law, of up to those revised approval amounts.
- (c) to approve the transfers from one States fund to another for 2025 of up to and including the amounts set in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 3 in line with Article 9(2)(b) of the Law.

- (d) to approve a transfer from the Consolidated Fund to the Stabilisation Fund in 2025 of up to £25 million, subject to a decision of the Minister for Treasury and Resources based on the availability of funds in the Consolidated Fund as at 31st December 2024 in excess of the estimates provided in this plan, or from budgeted underspends identified before 31st December 2025.
- (e) to approve a transfer from the Consolidated Fund to the Agricultural Loans Fund in 2025 of up to £2 million, subject to a decision of the Minister for Treasury and Resources based on availability of funds in the Consolidated Fund as at 31st December 2024 in excess of estimates provided in this plan, or from budgeted underspends identified before 31st December 2025;
- (f) to approve each major project that is to be started or continued in 2025 and the total cost of each such project and any amendments to the proposed total cost of a major project under a previously approved Government Plan, in line with Article 9(2)(d), (e) and (f) of the Law and as set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 4 to the Report.

to approve the proposed amount to be appropriated from the Consolidated Fund for 2025, for each head of expenditure, being gross expenditure less estimated income (if any), in line with Articles 9(2)(g), 10(1) and 10(2) of the Law, and set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Tables 5(i) and (ii) of the Report, **except that, in Summary Table 5(i) –**

- (i) **the Head of Expenditure for the Cabinet Office should be reduced by £86,215; and**
- (ii) **the Head of Expenditure for Customer and Local Services should be increased by £86,215 to support the funding of the Connect Me project.”.**
- (g) to approve the estimated income, being estimated gross income less expenditure, that each States trading operation will pay into its trading fund in 2025 in line with Article 9(2)(h) of the Law and set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 6 to the Report.
- (h) to approve the proposed amount to be appropriated from each States trading operation’s trading fund for 2025 for each head of expenditure in line with Article 9(2)(i) of the Law and set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 7 to the Report.
- (i) to approve the estimated income and expenditure proposals for the Climate Emergency Fund for 2025 as set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 8 to the Report.
- (j) to approve an updated and consolidated policy of the Strategic Reserve Fund as follows:

“The Strategic Reserve Fund, established in accordance with the provisions of Article 4 of the Public Finances (Jersey) Law 2005, is a permanent reserve only to be used:

- i. in exceptional circumstances to insulate the Island’s economy from severe structural decline such as the sudden collapse of a major Island industry or from major natural disaster.
  - ii. if necessary, for the purposes of providing funding (up to £100 million) for the Bank Depositors Compensation Scheme established under the Banking Business (Depositors Compensation) (Jersey) Regulations 2009, including to meet the States contribution to the Scheme and/or to meet any temporary cash flow funding requirements of the Scheme.
  - iii. to support the development of future healthcare facilities and the borrowing costs for such work, in line with a financing strategy agreed by the Assembly;
  - iv. as a holding fund for any or all monies raised through external financing until required, and for any monies related to the repayment of debt raised through external financing used to offset the repayment of debt, as and when required; and
  - v. in accordance with Article 24 of the Public Finances (Jersey) Law 2019, where the Minister for Treasury and Resources is satisfied that there exists an immediate threat to the health or safety of any of the inhabitants of Jersey, to the stability of the economy in Jersey or to the environment, for which no other suitable funding is available.”
- (k) to approve the transfer to the Strategic Reserve of the amounts due as a result of the move from prior-year basis taxation after 31st December 2025, as and when these payments are received (estimated at £280 million).
- (l) in relation to the new Government Headquarters (office), to approve;
- i. the exercising of the option to acquire the new Government Headquarters (estimated at £91 million), by the Public of the Island, in line with the pre-agreed terms; and
  - ii. the acquisition of the new Government Headquarters as an investment of the Social Security (Reserve) Fund (including authorising the meeting of expenses incurred in connection with the acquisition); and
  - iii. the subsequent leasing of the new Government Headquarters by the Public of the Island from the Social Security (Reserve) Fund, with commercial terms to be agreed between the Minister for Infrastructure (on behalf of the Public) and Minister for Social Security and the Minister for Treasury and Resources (both on behalf of the Fund); and
- (m) in relation to the new Government Headquarters, to authorise H.M. Attorney General, the Greffier of the States, the Ministers for Infrastructure, Social Security and Treasury and Resources, and the Public of the Island, to enter into such arrangements, including financing, and pass any contracts as are necessary to put into effect paragraph (m).

to approve, in accordance with Article 9(1) of the Law, the Government Plan 2025-2028, as set out in the Appendix to the accompanying Report, except that on page 14, after the words “support the ongoing well-being of Islanders”, there should be inserted the following words –

“As part of the prioritisation of community well-being, the Social Security department has allocated £391,215 of funding to the Connect Me project for the year 2025, to ensure the continuation of the project and support the introduction of social prescribing.”

## REPORT

### What is the Connect Me Scheme?

Launched in 2020, [Connect Me: Connecting our Communities](#) is a dynamic network of charities, community groups, health professionals, and volunteers in Jersey, offering community-based activities and services.

Inspired by the practice of social prescribing as a form of preventative healthcare, Connect Me aims to enhance mental health and combat loneliness through social engagement. By leveraging Jersey’s art, culture, and physical facilities, it promotes social mobility and inclusion as a non-medical alternative for improving well-being.

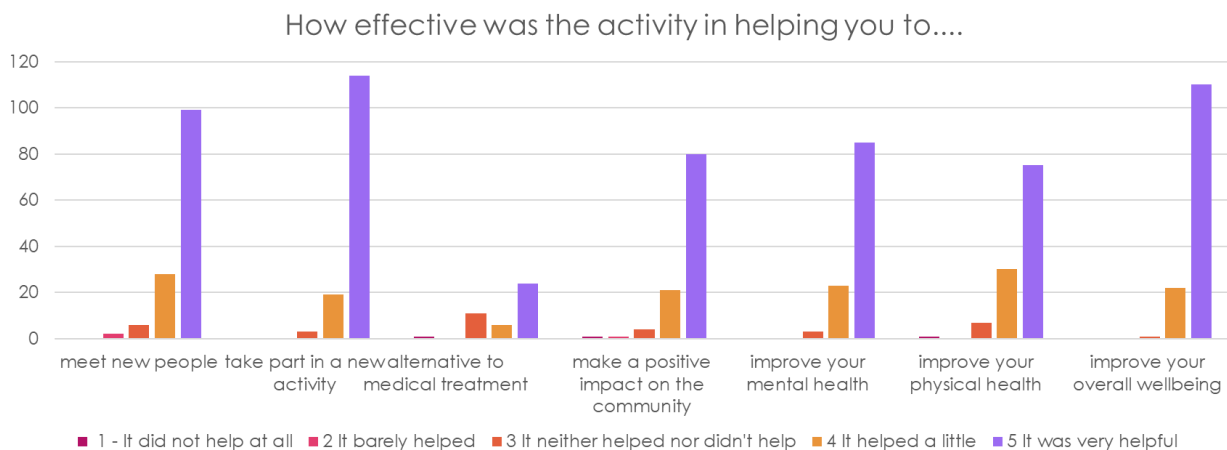
Grants of up to £5,000 are available for projects which will increase opportunities for Islanders to participate in artistic or physical activities. To date, 95 organisations have received Connect Me grants and an estimated 25,000 Islanders have benefited from the 150 projects funded by the Connect Me scheme.

### Benefits of Connect Me

The benefits of the Connect Me project are felt not just through improved mental and physical health and community connectedness, but also via savings to Government services and the increased economic activity participants are often able to demonstrate. A quote from one project organiser (Synthesis Transformations) states:

*“Having started the programme unemployed, this participant ended it gainfully employed in a flexible, creative role providing both mental & economic benefits.”<sup>1</sup>*

Connect Me is based upon principles of Outcomes Based Accountability, and thus all of the projects are required to evidence their effectiveness. Below is just a snapshot of the supporting data:



Kate Wright, one of the Community Connectors, stated:

*“It's by far the most impactful and successful programme I have personally been involved in.”*

<sup>1</sup> [Connect Me - a regenerative action research project that created real positive change](#)

Only last month, in the response to [Written Question 360/2024](#) the Minister confirmed that –

*The scheme is intrinsic to the development of social prescribing on the Island, by using both an internationally recognised social prescribing platform as well as the community connector and link worker network and providing small grants to community organisations to empower social mobility and increased participation in physical activity, arts, heritage, and culture.*

*The platform will allow Islanders to self-refer into activities, or be referred by professionals, including GPs, to access activities with support from link workers*

And yet, this year it transpired that within the savings required under the draft Budget (Government Plan) 2025-2028, funding for the scheme would be cut by 20% -

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

Something that the Panel received a briefing about recently was the Connect Me project, which, as I understand, was one of the projects that was subject to that 20 per cent cut in their ongoing budget. Can you just give your view on that and on that project, how valuable you think it is and whether you think it should have been cut?

**The Minister for Social Security:**

I think the grants programme there has seen some really good outcomes. The reason why, I will not say comfortable, but I could accept the cut in relation to that is because what we are talking about there is small grants for projects. They are projects that would have to apply to a grants programme, so the small grants were never guaranteed. It may well mean that some smaller projects do not continue or we cannot fund as many smaller projects but there is nothing there that will not be funded that was ongoing or continuous funding. It would have been added extras.

[transcript - quarterly public hearing with the minister for social security - 8th October 2024.pdf](#)

The number of projects that will be unable to receive funding if this 20% cut stands, is around 15-25, depending on the amount of grant money applied for and received. Extrapolating the figures from past projects, this means around 2,500-4,000 islanders will not access community wellbeing activities that otherwise could have been available.

**Social Prescribing – what is it and what are the benefits?**

Social prescribing is an approach that connects people to activities, groups, and services in their community to meet the practical, social and emotional needs that affect their health and wellbeing. It is an increasingly widespread practice in health services all over the world which has been proven an effective method of preventative healthcare, particularly for mental health improvement.

Social prescribing is an all-age, whole population approach that works particularly well for people who:

- have one or more long term conditions
- who need support with low level mental health issues

- who are lonely or isolated
- who have complex social needs which affect their wellbeing.<sup>2</sup>

No robust figures exist but it is thought that around 20% of patients consult their GP for primarily social issues, given this and the driving forces of an ageing population, increased complex health and social needs, and increasing demand on services, social prescribing is rapidly gaining popularity.<sup>3</sup>

Earlier this year the Elemental Social Prescribing Platform was launched for Jersey. All GPs will be trained and accessing the social prescribing system by the end of 2025, so this year's Connect Me projects are more important than ever due to increased awareness and signposting.

### **Tackling Loneliness and Social Isolation**

Figures from the 2023 [Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle Survey](#) show that 25% of adults in Jersey feel lonely often or some of the time. This increases to 41% for those in the 16-34 age bracket. Loneliness has impacts on both mental and physical health, which may include<sup>4,5</sup>:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Low self-esteem
- Sleep problems
- Physiological aging

Loneliness and lack of social connection also has an economic impact, with increased social interaction helping to drive economic growth<sup>6</sup>.

As outlined by the [Government of Jersey](#), the scheme aims to engage Islanders in community activities to:

- promote a sense of connection
- prevent loneliness
- enhance both physical health and overall wellbeing

In the process of drafting this amendment, I had the pleasure of talking with a number of the project organisers and participants. What I discovered was a growing network of organisations and individuals which has grown out of the Connect Me funding that the

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6301369/>

<sup>4</sup> Mushtaq R, Shoib S, Shah T, Mushtaq S. Relationship between loneliness, psychiatric disorders and physical health ? A review on the psychological aspects of loneliness. J Clin Diagn Res. 2014 Sep;8(9):WE01-4. doi: 10.7860/JCDR/2014/10077.4828. Epub 2014 Sep 20. PMID: 25386507; PMCID: PMC4225959.

<sup>5</sup> Hom, M. A., Chu, C., Rogers, M. L., & Joiner, T. E. (2020). A Meta-Analysis of the Relationship Between Sleep Problems and Loneliness. *Clinical Psychological Science*, 8(5), 799-824. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167702620922969>

<sup>6</sup> Burlina, C., & Rodríguez-Pose, A. (2023). Alone and lonely. The economic cost of solitude for regions in Europe. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 55(8), 2067-2087. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X231169286>



States Assembly initiated. The impacts are being felt far and wide across all Parishes and much further than just the initial funded projects. I heard stories of long-term health issues that have been turned around, employment gained, friendships built, enjoyment of sport, nature and creativity, and most of all feelings of connectedness, belonging, and gratitude to the Government and States Assembly for funding the activities. The Connect Me funding is having a dramatic positive effect on many Islanders' lives.

Sophie Moulson, qualified Forest School leader, Outdoor Mental Health practitioner, and leader of Nature Base, embodies the aims of the Connect Me project. She can be seen in locations all around the island providing free nature-based play and learning to families in parks, housing estates and green spaces in many Parishes:

*“People like to do things in their own Parish – we saw a huge surge of people joining from the homes around where the pop-ups were located. They were walking to us and I witnessed families making connections with each other and discovering that they lived close by. The people in the community engaged in conversations with each other and shared things about their families and children. We witnessed and were told; that these interactions just weren't happening in the parks naturally without the activities running. We facilitate people talking to each other. There are divisions in areas of our communities and these projects go in to where people are and build connections in a way that government aren't always able to do. One estate was like a ghost town before – no children playing out – until we were there and now the children and families are getting to know each other, and other community groups are starting to go into these spaces too. It's not without its challenges but we are actively building community. Lots of people aren't on social media but they will see us out of their window and come down and join in. The wisdom that the older mums pass on to the younger ones – it's like a village community starting to build.”*

It is clear that the Connect Me funding is empowering our community to innovate and provide solutions for themselves. Furthermore, it is clear that these community projects are exceptional value for money and are delivering positive outcomes for health, productivity and community wellbeing. It is critical that the funding is maintained.

### **Other Examples of Successful Projects funded by Connect Me**

- [Step 55 Club](#) - a dance club and community project, that provides a pathway to health, and a powerful form of social connection, through dance-based activities. This project has been delivered mostly in the Parishes of Trinity, St Martin and St Brelade, and although aimed at over 55s, is completely inclusive and welcomes islanders of any age, gender or culture.
- [The Communi-tree project](#) – a pilot six-week project to offer wellbeing art sessions in the community. This project has helped participants build confidence and self-esteem, combat loneliness, and give people a focus in their day and a routine in their week. It has also led to a number of clients continuing to develop their newfound skills, pushing them further with the art they're producing. The funding received from Connect Me enabled the team at Acorn to purchase the resources needed to get them started and was essential to getting the project off the ground, and also helped to fund tutors to teach techniques to participants.

- [Building Stronger Communities: Releasing Better Neighbours](#) – Upon receiving a grant from the Connect Me: Connecting our Communities Grant Scheme, the Releasing Better Neighbours programme has been able to introduce additional activities to support the long-term rehabilitation of prisoners at HMP La Moye bringing in external agencies to support them. These have included activities aimed at helping with supporting prisoners’ mental and physical health. Even in the short time these activities have been introduced prisoners have reported positive responses.

*“The Connect Me grant has helped us to look at things differently, and bring outside into the prison and really truly build that connection with the community. It has made a really positive impact on prisoners here.”*

Staff member

- [Jersey Youth Choir](#) – provides a choral opportunity to children and young people, irrespective of their circumstances or experience. Thanks to receiving a grant from the Connect Me: Connecting our Communities Grant Scheme, The Jersey Youth Choir has been able to minimise costs to its participants so that money isn’t a barrier for those interested in getting involved.

## Further Testimonies

### [Jennifer’s Journey to Connection: Coach to Connector – Official Government of Jersey Blog](#)

*“In my experience, connectors help in so many ways, and how they do that is incredibly varied. At Jersey Sport, we recently received a grant to bring a women and toddler exercise class to a community of women at the Islamic Centre in St Helier. We hope that by attending the weekly exercise class, the women in the group will improve both their physical and mental health and feel more included within their community. We aim to build confidence so they can eventually participate in community-based activities outside the centre, meeting other mums and families that use Jersey Sport Move More programmes, thereby increasing their social network. Women, especially new parents, often describe feeling isolated and unable to spend time on their hobbies or health pursuits. Creating a space where we can support women in this way is very powerful.”*

### [Embracing Community Wellbeing: Connecting Our Community – Official Government of Jersey Blog](#)

*“I had a desire to see more people in Jersey feel a sense of belonging and be empowered to access the support they need. This is particularly important for people who are vulnerable and disconnected. Every time connectors meet together, fantastic ideas are shared and we learn from one another. Sometimes this comes to fruition through a new, creative idea and sometimes it’s learning from what hasn’t gone so well in our context. Staying connected has helped us to call on the expertise of other people and be more efficient in what we do.”*

### [Paul Simmons, Age Concern: Connect Me Initiative \(youtube.com\)](#)

*“The funds were delivered promptly which allowed us to get our project up and running within a month. We’ve already noticed an upturn in membership, and it’s been a good opportunity to get people together, particularly in this time when people have been isolated.”* Paul Simmons, Senior Manager of Age Concern

[Padel For All - Grant Scheme - YouTube](#)

*“We’ve designed a six-week schools program that will promote both physical and mental well-being with the children. The grant has allowed us to provide approximately 120 kids with this program across nine schools, and we have official feedback mechanisms and for all nine schools it is actually fantastic. If you can articulate a strong business case, the application process is very, very simple. And more importantly, the decision and the money come very, very quickly.”* Morgan Jubb, Co-founder of Padel For All

**Financial and staffing implications**

The Connect Me programme received £380,000 of funding in 2024. For 2025 this was to be cut to £305,000.

The requested amount is therefore for the project to receive the 2024 funding amount (£380,000) plus 3% RPI, (calculated using the Government of Jersey’s inflation calculator), with the shortfall in funding (£86,215) to be allocated from the budget line for the Cabinet Office – potentially from funds set aside to support pilot schemes.

**Children’s Rights Impact Assessment**

A Children’s Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) has been prepared in relation to this proposition and is available to read on the States Assembly website.