

Government of Jersey
Union Street | St Helier | Jersey | JE2 3DN

Deputy Catherine Curtis

Chair, Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

29 May 2025

Dear Chair,

Follow-up matters from the Quarterly Public Hearing on 30th April 2025

Thank you for your letter dated 20 May with follow up questions from the Quarterly Hearing on 30 April. Please see my responses below.

1. With regards to the Children’s Social Care workforce, please can you confirm the number of posts filled by permanent, fixed term, and agency workers?

As of 23 May there are 296 posts within Children’s Social Care. These are filled by permanent, fixed term, and agency workers as follows:

Contract Type	Positions filled
Permanent	191
Fixed Term	14
Vacancy covered by Agency	45
Uncovered Vacancies	46

2. Minister, can you set out the cost of agency social work provision in 2023 and 2024, along with forecasted spend for 2025? How would this compare if the posts had been filled by permanent staff?

The breakdown of 2023 and 2024 social work provision spend, and the forecast spend for 2025 is as follows:

	2023	2024	Forecast 2025
	£4,026,545	£3,311,373	£2,800,000
Cost if permanent staff were in post	£3,327,723	£2,736,672	£2,314,000

Comparing the Civil Servant grades with the agency staff rates shows that the agency premium is approximately 21%. Based on this assumption, the costs that would have been incurred had the posts been filled by permanent staff have been provided.

- 3. Please confirm the number of children in Jersey who live in poverty, as per the Government's calculations, and provide details about the measures and indicators used for that calculation.**

As outlined in my letter to the Panel from 19 May, Statistics Jersey's publication of the [Jersey Household Income Distribution report 2021/2022](#) indicated that one in four (24%) of children were in relative low income, a lower proportion than the UK (29%), where 'relative low income' is defined as household income below 60% of median equivalised income.

- 4. If possible, please can you provide any details about the play and youth spaces planned at Fort Regent and how, or if, this will be shaped by the forthcoming play strategy?**

The Panel will be aware that there was recently a public consultation on the relocation and provision of facilities at Fort Regent. Ministers recognise the importance of offering play facilities indoors whilst maintaining affordability and sustainability of the development, and discussions about this provision are ongoing within the Council of Ministers.

As part of the consultation process for the Play Strategy, representatives from States of Jersey Development Company (SOJDC) were engaged with in a dedicated meeting. During this session, the objectives and emerging themes of the Play Strategy were presented, with particular emphasis on insights gathered from children and young people. Although the plans for Fort Regent were not public at the time of this meeting, positive discussions took place regarding the need for more spaces for teenagers.

To support the consultation, key documents underpinning the Play Strategy such as the Jersey Youth Parliament's Right to Play report were shared. These materials provided evidence of young people's perspectives and priorities.

I feel it is important to remind the Panel that the Play Strategy will be a key document to advocate for long term plans to ensure that play spaces are available and protected for children and young people in Jersey, and that the development of specific play spaces remains within the remit of the Minister for Infrastructure.

Updates on the development and finalisation of the Play Strategy will be shared with key stakeholders, including those involved in Fort Regent. This ongoing communication aims to keep stakeholders informed and to highlight opportunities for alignment and support in delivering the strategy's goals.

5. With regards to short breaks and respite care, please can you provide further details about the development of the plan and the next steps that will be taken to consider the offers available to families.

A review and needs assessment of Short Breaks was completed by CYPES Commissioning and Transformation in 2024. Here is a summary of the review findings:

1. The current commissioned providers and in-house services do not have sufficient capacity to fulfil the increasing demand for short breaks in its current structure.
2. There is no legislation in Jersey about the requirement to provide short breaks or policy that clearly sets out what a short break means in Jersey and the statutory entitlement for one. Often a short break is referred to as respite when it is designed to be a child centred opportunity.
3. The current offer includes a school holiday scheme and families with children with complex needs have limited access to universal childcare in Jersey which means the short breaks scheme is often utilised as childcare during the school holidays.
4. The current model of maintaining a short break offer and a school holiday scheme is not sustainable within the current budget allocation and there is currently no additional funding available to extend the offer that meets the needs of families to access childcare.
5. The school holiday scheme should be removed from the short breaks offer and alternative options for inclusive childcare should be explored particularly for children accessing targeted group support.
6. A consultation and wider piece of work is required that defines a statutory entitlement to short breaks in Jersey that meets the needs of families within the allocated budget.
7. There is a significant gap in specialist provision as the staffing required at this level is a minimum of 1 to 1. This has resulted in children at targeted level receiving more than those with a higher level of need at specialist level and is challenging to provide an equitable offer.
8. Families need to be clear about what the entitlement is and who is eligible in order to manage expectations.
9. Actual demand for short breaks will likely increase (currently only small proportion of children with needs access a short break) and any revised offer will need to factor in a likely increase in demand.

Short Breaks provision continues to commission external providers to offer weekly short breaks as well as a school holiday scheme. In addition, overnight care packages and home care respite is offered to children based on the individual's assessed needs.

Based on the findings from a review of Short Breaks, a summary of the proposed changes is provided below:

- A review of the structure of the current 'short breaks' offer is needed to include policy work to define Short Breaks more clearly as a statutory entitlement, distinct from general school holiday childcare.
- Identify and promote other school holiday childcare opportunities and social security benefits to reduce resource pressure on the Short Breaks programme and ensure families are clear on their entitlement

- Explore alternative childcare and robust inclusion in partnership with the private sector, including where appropriate, support the transition of children from targeted to universal provision
- Develop a robust needs assessment of children with complex needs in Jersey
- Develop a robust, eligibility criteria to access Short Breaks
- Introduce a single, streamlined application and assessment for families, to improve the experience and communications with families.
- Commission external providers to deliver a defined number of places annually and provide upfront block funding to enable advance recruitment of trained staff and increase provider capacity
- Define capacity of internal services to extend provision for families of children with complex needs

I trust the above is of assistance to the Panel.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Vibert', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Connétable Richard Vibert
Minister for Children and Families
E | r.vibert2@gov.je