

STATES OF JERSEY



RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC BY THE GOVERNMENT OF JERSEY (P.A.C.3/2022): EXECUTIVE RESPONSE

**Presented to the States on 10th May 2022
by the Public Accounts Committee**

STATES GREFFE

FOREWORD

In accordance with paragraphs 64-66 of the [Code of Practice](#) for engagement between ‘Scrutiny Panels and the Public Accounts Committee’ and ‘the Executive’, (as derived from the [Proceedings Code of Practice](#)) the Public Accounts Committee presents the Executive Response to its Review of the [Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic by the Government of Jersey](#) (P.A.C.3/2022) presented to the States on 11th April 2022).

As a result of the minimal time remaining before the suspension of the Public Accounts Committee's activities before the 2022 General Election, the Public Accounts Committee would therefore recommend that its successor should consider publishing comments on the Executive Response following the appointment of new members on 19th July 2022.

Connétable K. Shenton-Stone
Vice-Chair, Public Accounts Committee

PAC Review 3/2022 - Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic by the Government of Jersey

Government of Jersey Executive Response

Summary of response:

The Chief Executive welcomes the Public Accounts Committee's acknowledgement of the outstanding contributions made by members of the public service throughout the pandemic and thereafter.

The Chief Executive also agrees that, despite the exceptional nature of events, lessons can be learnt to inform future emergency responses. Central to this is ensuring that the decision-making processes and procedures that underpin such an emergency response are clear and accountable.

The Public Accounts Committee's report makes many helpful recommendations. Of these, the majority have been accepted, with only four of the 23 rejected. Seven recommendations have been partially accepted largely on the basis that the Government is awaiting the conclusions of the Independent Covid Review which is due to be completed by the end of July 2022.

Action Plan

Recommendations	Action	Target date	Responsible Officer
R1 The minutes of the Competent Authority Ministers should be (and should have been) released to Scrutiny in a timely fashion throughout the course of the pandemic.	Accepted and closed Further to the approval by the Assembly of P86 "Competent Authorities Ministers: Release of Minutes of Meetings to Scrutiny", preparations were made to collate and deliver approved minutes to Scrutiny. This was done in line with the instruction of the Chief Minister, following consultation with the Council of Ministers, that papers be provided in hard copy to provide assurance over confidentiality, and after having	Closed	Head of MSU

	<p>redacted for legal advice. This was a considerable process and did take time.</p> <p>It is also worth noting that all Agendas and Papers were provided immediately after meetings, and extensive briefings for Panels took throughout the pandemic, including expert public health officials and Ministers, ensuring Panels were well-informed throughout.</p> <p>Going forward all minutes will be released via the process above in line with the decision of the States Assembly under P86. This process may be reviewed when the new CoM is in place from July 2022</p>		
<p>R2 The Government should prioritise the replacement of the 32-year-old Emergency Powers and Planning (Jersey) Law 1990 in order to ensure that it fully reflects the realities of ministerial governance for future crises, drawing on learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>The policy development for the new proposed Civil Contingencies Law is already underway and will be prioritised through the pre-election period and into the next parliamentary term. The development of the policy will take into account the National Preparedness Commission ‘Independent Review of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and its supporting arrangements’, which reviewed the UK Civil Contingencies Act in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and is therefore directly relevant to our policy development. It must also reflect the specific experience of Jersey during the pandemic, notably that technological developments and the nature and duration of the pandemic ‘contingency’ allowed parliamentary processes to continue, which most</p>	<p>Law drafting instructions to be prepared by Q3 2022 [subsequent progress subject to Government legislative priorities]</p>	<p>Director General, Justice and Home Affairs</p> <p>Director General, SPPP</p>

	jurisdiction's 'emergencies' legislation does not yet account for.		
R3 The internal audit review of the GP surgery contract, as recommended by the Comptroller and Auditor General, should be finalised and published as soon as possible.	Accept To clarify, the internal audit review referred to in the report is not an Internal Audit review undertaken by the Chief Internal Auditor but an internal quality assurance review which is being undertaken by Treasury for HSC. The C&AG's report notes that as at February 2021, a validation / audit process on data submitted by GP surgeries in response to payments made to them under contracts for services during the early stages of the pandemic was undertaken and £2m income paid to GP surgeries under the contracts was still unpaid and being recovered. The recovery is near completion and a report will be published latest by end of Q3 2022 to provide the overview of the costs.	Q3 2022	Head of Finance Business Partnering for HCS, T&E
R4 The Government should undertake a review of the efficiency of the emergency decision-making processes and publish a revised emergency governance framework to simplify governance and decision-making processes with greater clarity, building on best practices in other jurisdictions and partnerships with other jurisdictions.	Accept in part The Government mobilised an extensive response to the COVID-19 pandemic and moved forward fast to deliver this, with emergency plans put in place, and governance and decision-making structures set up, to manage the public health response. Understanding the efficiency and effectiveness of these arrangements is an important part of the learning from COVID-19 and will help to prepare the Island for an equivalent emergency event in the future.	Decision on scope and potential timeline to be made following Jersey Independent Covid-19 Review Panel report [Q3 2022]	Director General, Justice and Home Affairs Director General, SPPP

	<p>This recommendation is, therefore, partially accepted on the basis that governance and decision-making processes will be reviewed. However, we wish to receive the findings of the Jersey Independent COVID-19 Review, which is also likely to make recommendations in this area, before making a commitment to publishing a revised governance framework. We are unable, therefore, to commit to the scope or timeline for reviewing these arrangements until the Review Panel has reported with its findings and recommendations. It should be noted, as set out in response to Recommendation 7, that a review of health protection arrangements will be undertaken, which includes plans to manage public health emergencies.</p>		
<p>R5 The Government should clarify how individuals who were recruited to key work programmes to assist with the response to COVID-19 were selected, remunerated, and who they were accountable to.</p>	<p>Accepted in part & Closed</p> <p>Detail was provided to PAC in the Chief Executives letter of 14 February 2022 to reflect those individuals engaged under contract by the Government of Jersey to assist with the response to COVID-19. The PAC also noted in their report that they would recommend their successor consider the appointments as part of their review of COVID-19 Test and Trace Programme. No further action required for officers at this point.</p> <p>An Emergency Resourcing Team was established within People and Corporate Services in March 2020 to provide sufficient resources to cover critical roles required as a result of the pandemic. New processes were built in days to ensure the rapid onboarding of staff. The Emergency Resourcing Team was active</p>	<p>Closed</p>	<p>Group Director, People & Corporate Services</p>

	<p>during the height of the crisis and during this time the team were providing daily dashboards summarising recruitment activity to critical roles.</p> <p>The Emergency Resourcing Team did not cover the appointment to clinical roles in Health & Community Services which was managed through a separate team in Health</p> <p>Any further findings and recommendations will be considered on receipt of the Jersey Independent COVID-19 Review and any future PAC successor reports.</p>		
<p>R6 The Government should update its website in relation to emergency planning, removing references to the Emergency Planning Board which has been replaced by the Jersey Resilience Forum.</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>The Emergency Planning team conducted an extensive review of the relevant sections of the Government of Jersey website in summer 2021, but not all of the relevant changes have been made. This will now be actioned.</p>	<p>Q3 2022</p>	<p>Director General, Justice and Home Affairs</p> <p>Chief Operating Officer</p>
<p>R7 The Government should review its engagement with the UK and other jurisdictions by 31 December 2022 to highlight areas of improvement identified through the meetings held and to improve the effectiveness of inter-jurisdictional collaboration during future public health crises.</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>A review of health protection arrangements, which includes plans to manage public health emergencies, is being carried out with support from Public Health Wales. A work programme to strengthen these arrangements will be implemented in 2022-2023. This provides an opportunity to review inter-jurisdictional collaboration arrangements.</p>	<p>Review to be published by Q4 2022</p>	<p>Director of Public Health</p>

	<p>It should be noted that arrangements for inter-jurisdictional collaboration exist already. The Directors of Public Health in Guernsey, Isle of Man, and Jersey meet regularly. These meetings include discussions on public health emergencies –for example, pandemic plans have been shared and discussed.</p> <p>Mutual support for specialist public health emergencies can already be accessed through the UK. Recently, a tabletop exercise (with Guernsey and the UK) was conducted to develop plans for the management of nuclear incidents.</p>		
<p>R8 An internal review should be undertaken of Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell and of the effectiveness of Government emergency decision-making bodies to identify improvements, the appropriateness of the functions and whether there is a need to create a distinct independent scientific advisory body.</p>	<p>Accept in part</p> <p>The Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell (STAC) performs an important role in supporting the emergency response to COVID-19, providing scientific evidence and technical input to inform policy advice and decision-making throughout the pandemic.</p> <p>A survey of STAC members on the effectiveness of these arrangements was included as part of the Public Health submission to the Jersey Independent Covid-19 Review, which will provide further learning to inform decisions about the future arrangements for STAC. We therefore wish to receive the findings of the Review Panel, which may also make recommendations in this area, before committing to a parallel internal review of the arrangements at this time.</p>	<p>STAC emergency role to be considered following publication of Jersey Independent Covid-19 Review Panel report [Q3 2022]</p> <p>Scientific advisory body to be considered as part of a Jersey Public Health Strategy [Q4 2022]</p>	<p>Director General, SPPP</p> <p>Director of Public Health</p>

	<p>The proposal to establish a scientific advisory committee for public health non-emergency situations is already being explored as part of the development of a Public Health strategy for Jersey.</p>		
<p>R9 The PAC would recommend that an internal review be undertaken to ascertain the efficiency and quality of statistics published during the COVID-19 pandemic and to identify best practice.</p>	<p>Accept in part COVID-19 statistics are regularly reviewed in light of the changing pandemic landscape and those metrics which are no longer of a high enough quality or relevance are discontinued. For example, reporting on the split of symptomatic and asymptomatic cases stopped when contact tracing follow up calls stopped, and the team was not able to provide data for all cases. Public Health Intelligence will continue to regularly review the quality and efficiency of the statistics published as part of business as usual.</p> <p>This recommendation is, therefore, partially accepted on the basis that statistics published during the COVID-19 pandemic will be reviewed. However, we wish to receive the findings of the Jersey Independent Covid-19 Review, which is also likely to make recommendations in this area, before making a commitment to a further review of statistics and consider what measures might need to be taken to improve the efficiency and quality of data. As such, we cannot commit to an internal review until the Review Panel has reported with its findings and recommendations.</p>	<p>Decision on scope and potential timeline to be made following Jersey Independent Covid-19 Review Panel report [Q3 2022]</p>	<p>Chief Statistician and Director of Statistics and Analytics</p> <p>Head of Public Health Intelligence</p>

<p>R10 It is recommended that as part of this review, and in liaison with the Statistics Users Group, Statistics Jersey addresses the issues which caused a pause in work which was not related to the pandemic to ensure that the production of other significant statistical analysis is not compromised during a future emergency.</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>Survey work such as the Exit Survey (of visitors leaving Jersey) and the Living Costs and Household Income Survey (carried out in people’s households) had to be stopped due to COVID-19 restrictions. The 2020 Jersey Opinion and Lifestyle Survey was reduced in size and repurposed with a COVID-19 focus. These impacts could not have been avoided.</p> <p>However, work on Purchasing Power Parity international price comparisons did not take place as planned. Re-starting in September 2021 the Living Costs and Household Income Survey meant that production of the 2021 Census first results was four months slower than had been the case ten years earlier. Addressing this issue would require Statistics Jersey to have more capacity in future, and at least one additional member of the senior leadership team so that multiple projects could be led in parallel. This will require a business case for additional resources.</p>	<p>Q4 2022 [subject to approval of business case for additional staff]</p>	<p>Chief Statistician and Director of Statistics and Analytics</p>
<p>R11 It is recommended that the Government give consideration to the prioritisation of emergencies and provides annual updates on emergency procedures in light of global and local developments, with consistent capacity given to future pandemics.</p>	<p>Accept in part</p> <p>Aspects of this recommendation would benefit from the findings of the Independent Covid Review, and the outcome of the work to replace the Emergency Powers and Planning Law and consequent changes.</p> <p>The development of the Community Risk Register will enable increased oversight of and insight into the risks facing the Island, including future pandemics.</p>	<p>Q1 2023</p>	<p>Director General, Justice and Home Affairs</p>

<p>R12 It is recommended that the Department for Health and Community Services work in collaboration with relevant functions such as People and Corporate Services to produce and publish a staff wellbeing report and strategy as soon as possible and no later than the end of the second quarter of 2022.</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>Although no formal strategy is in place, a comprehensive programme of wellbeing support has been available for all HCS staff and HCS teams/wards since March 2020.</p> <p>Quarterly wellbeing reports providing a summary of HCS wellbeing activity are reported into the HCS People and Organisational Development (POD) Committee.</p> <p>A bi-monthly HCS wellbeing committee was created in January 2020 and reports into the HCS POD Committee.</p> <p>People and Corporate services shared their Government of Jersey wellbeing strategy with HCS in April 2022.</p> <p>The existing wellbeing work in HCS has been extended to a wider programme including Culture, Engagement & Wellbeing and commenced in January 2022.</p> <p>This will also include the development of an employee wellbeing report and formalise the existing workstreams into a wellbeing strategy. Using existing resources, this will be achieved by end of 2022 whilst continuing with the delivery of the HCS wellbeing programme.</p>	<p>Q4 2022</p>	<p>Director of Culture, Engagement & Wellbeing, HCS</p>
<p>R13 It is recommended that staff within the General Hospital are provided with the opportunity to undertake a</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>HCS is already seeking information on staff wellbeing and concerns in relation to (but not restricted to) the</p>	<p>Q4 2022</p>	<p>Director of Culture, Engagement & Wellbeing, HCS</p>

<p>participatory survey and review to understand staff wellbeing and concerns arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>	<p>Covid-19 pandemic. Understanding employee wellbeing is regularly sought through a range of HCS forums and activities for example, the HCS Wellbeing Committee, consultation sessions with HCS teams as they resume pre-Covid roles, interventions targeted to support HCS teams/wards, provision and evaluation of HCS employee psychological support using outcome measures evaluating wellbeing needs.</p> <p>HCS recognises the need for a participatory approach and a wider forum for employees to share their experiences and wellbeing concerns/learning from the pandemic. To address this, clinical psychologists have designed a specific project to enable the sharing of the details and depths of staff experiences. This has resulted in the development of a published book 'Our Story' which is encouraging employees to share their experiences responding to the Covid pandemic in their HCS roles. This project aims not only to capture and learn from colleague experiences but also to support employees with processing their experiences and to create a shared memory of the pandemic. This project is proposed to address the recommendation with the publication date end of 2022.</p>		
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<p>R14 The Government of Jersey should seek to publish a breakdown of spend on its COVID-19 response in 2020, 2021 and 2022, with a clear indication of where savings were made through discounts and voluntary support from Islanders and businesses as part of the 2022 Annual Report and Accounts.</p>	<p>Accept in part As with the 2020 Annual Report and Accounts, a breakdown of expenditure will be provided.</p> <p>There was a tremendous response from the community in helping, particularly those in the most vulnerable groups. It would be hugely time consuming to try to estimate that contribution and, in all likelihood, would involve large amounts of estimating and prove to be inaccurate.</p>	<p>April 2023, with publication of Annual Report & Accounts for 2022</p>	<p>Treasurer of the States</p>
<p>R15 The PAC would recommend that the results of the project closure reports are published upon completion by the Government to demonstrate transparency and encourage best practice to be developed in the event of a future crisis.</p>	<p>Accept. Review and audit work is already underway in response to the report of the Comptroller & Auditor General dated 24 November 2021. These project closure reports will be published on completion.</p>	<p>September 2022</p>	<p>Director General Economy</p>
<p>R19 A consultation should be conducted with carers, charities, and volunteers to understand how to improve the support they receive in future crises.</p>	<p>Accept Government will consult with representative bodies, such as Carers Jersey, the Association of Jersey Charities, Jersey Care Commission and Volunteer.je to understand how to improve the support their members receive in future crises.</p>	<p>Q4 2022</p>	<p>Director General Customer and Local Services</p>
<p>R20 Clarity must be provided on when the supply of free PPE will come to an end to provide transparency on future public expenditure and the information needed by both local PPE suppliers</p>	<p>Accept As an update, all recipients of free of charge PPE were advised in September 2021 to re-engage with their usual suppliers in anticipation of the service ending in 2022 subject to COVID prevalence.</p>	<p>Q3 2022 (or as required based on political decisions)</p>	<p>Head of Non-Clinical Support Services, HCS</p>

<p>and those continuing to receive free PPE for business planning purposes.</p>	<p>The provision of PPE ceased on 31 March for most users. Under recommendation from STAC and PH, private organisations who deliver 'regular intimate care to the island's most vulnerable' received an extension to at least 31 July 2022. This will be reassessed by STAC in June to determine when free supply should cease.</p> <p>HCS will ensure any future decisions on community PPE will be clearly communicated.</p>		
<p>R22 The final decommissioning report for the Nightingale Hospital should be prioritised and published as soon as possible to demonstrate transparency and best practice and include the relevant decommissioning plans for the deconstruction the Nightingale Hospital.</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>The Nightingale Hospital has now been decommissioned.</p> <p>The project final report will be completed by the end of Q2 2022.</p>	<p>Q2 2022</p>	<p>Director General IHE</p>
<p>R23 The Communications Directorate should commit to a public-facing review of its communications strategy and structure during the COVID-19 pandemic, to identify areas of learning, engage with Islanders and affected organisations, and to respond to concerns raised to the PAC by stakeholders during this review.</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>Given there is an Independent COVID-19 Review currently being undertaken, we consider it appropriate to receive the findings of the Jersey Independent COVID-19 Review, which may make recommendations in this area, before making a commitment to a public-facing review of communications during the COVID-19 pandemic to identify areas of learning.</p> <p>We are unable, therefore, to commit to the scope or timeline for reviewing these arrangements at this time until the Review Panel has reported with its findings and recommendations.</p>	<p>Decision on scope and potential timeline to be made following Jersey Independent Covid-19 Review Panel report [Q3 2022]</p>	<p>Director of Communications</p>

Recommendations not accepted

	Recommendation	Reason for rejection
	<p>16. The Government should seek to improve the clarity and legibility of guidance for future business support schemes to reduce overclaims, with a dedicated support officer to give assistance to applicants and ensure that the guidance is understood.</p>	<p>It is not possible or realistic to expect Government to ensure that the guidance is understood in every case, indeed, the onus is placed upon the claimant within their declaration and Government made information available through a range of channels.</p> <p>The Government provided significant additional funding to Jersey Business to assist local businesses with support during the pandemic, including advice on how to access support under the full range of available schemes. Government consulted with a range of organisations in the design and delivery of schemes, including Chamber of Commerce, and received direct representation from a number of trade bodies and individual business owners. A helpline and dedicated email inboxes were also available for use.</p> <p>Evidence from overall claimant population would point to Government guidance being, on the whole, clear and quite readily understood by claimants.</p>
	<p>17. The Department for Customer and Local Services should appoint an identifiable officer to serve as a direct point of contact between the Government and those who it is seeking repayments from.</p>	<p>The contact details for the dedicated Covid Business Support team are: Covidsupportaudit@gov.je or 01534 444444. These have been used by businesses throughout the pandemic for contact regarding audits and repayments of overclaim amounts.</p> <p>Having only a single named officer is not practical to maintain continuity of service.</p>
	<p>18. The Government should review its approach to agriculture and other excluded economic sectors to determine ways of providing support to local, on-Island industry.</p>	<p>Government provides ongoing support to the agricultural sector through, for example, the Rural Initiative Scheme. Providing new support to the sector on a retrospective basis would be an ineffective and inefficient use of tax-payer resources: an</p>

		<p>intervention that would be referred to in economic terms as 'deadweight'. Plans are being developed to re-capitalise the Rural Initiative Scheme from the COVID-related Economic Recovery Allocation and this will provide forward-looking support that is better targeted towards outcomes consistent with the Common Strategic Priorities.</p>
	<p>21. The Government should publish a clarification regarding what the UK agreed to provide to Jersey free-of-charge during pandemic, including a breakdown of the estimated costs of these provisions.</p>	<p>The UK Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) provided a list of items which it agreed it would provide to us as a Crown Dependency, free of charge. This included PPE and other COVID-19 related consumables. We are unable to provide a breakdown of the estimated costs of these provisions as GoJ was not made aware of the DHSC expenditure and is unable to estimate their costs as we are also unaware of the volume and frequency and purchasing arrangements within the DHSC procurement teams.</p>