

8th November 2023

Jersey Cares
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Central Chambers
14 Hill Street
St Helier
JE2 4UA

Deputy Catherine Curtis
Chair - Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel
c/o Morier House
Halkett Place
St Helier
Jersey

By Email

Dear Deputy Curtis,

Thank you for your letter on the 20th of October inviting Jersey Cares to contribute views to the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. We welcome this opportunity to check the alignment of the Government Plan against the priorities and concerns of those we have worked alongside since 2018.

Jersey Cares was formed following the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry (2017) by a diverse range of people and organisations with a collective profound concern for children in care. Following extensive local dialogue¹ with those with professional and lived experience of the 'care system', and detailed research into 'what works', we developed our model. Our work encompasses advocacy, influencing and opportunities. Our vision is love, belonging and opportunity. As such, any consultation request in relation to the 'care system' will always be guided by the question 'do the proposals promote love, belonging and opportunity?' for people with experience of care.

Our response to the Scrutiny Panel is founded in this vision and our collective hope that the Plan for Government 2024-2027 offers the potential to create real and lasting change for Jersey's care experienced community.

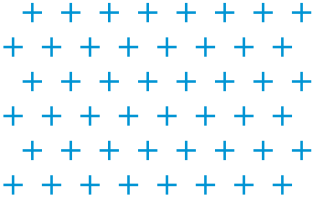
We note the alignment between policy priorities, advocacy themes (collated from four years of data)[†] and the aspirations of senior leadership across Government*. This is **extremely hopeful if this intent can be mobilised into action**. Jersey is in a position to move from the negative flywheel (shared with and recognised by a range of local stakeholders) to a positive and self-reinforcing flywheel.

* Please see Appendix 1

† Please see Appendix 2

¹ Documented in the [Listen Louder report](#)





We particularly welcome the focus on early intervention and prevention, whole family support, an ambition to embed the views of children and young people into formal processes and a commitment to support 'care leavers' to thrive into adulthood. However, we, and a range of third sector partners have noted our concern on the articulation and delivery of early intervention in the Children and Young People (Jersey) Law 2022².

With our vision of love, belonging and opportunity in mind, we will answer each question in order:

1. UPGRADE TO CYPES ESTATES

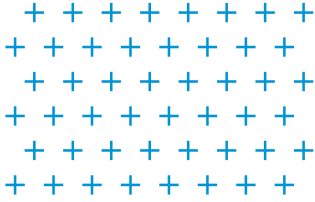
As a State Party to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) since 2014³ children and young people in Jersey have the right to education, identity, play and to access culture and the arts. The expansion of the provision at Mont à L'Abbé along with a new youth centre may increase the extent to which these rights are upheld for children and young people across the island. We would welcome insight from the Government on how the success of these new provisions will be measured and feedback from children and young people gained.

We additionally welcome the announcement by the Minister for Children, Young People & Education that a Commencement Act has been lodged to bring consideration for children's rights into Jersey Law from the 1st January 2024⁴. We hope this is the next step on the journey to fully embed children's rights into Jersey Law.

² [Response-to-Children-and-Young-Peoples-Law-and-guidance-Jersey-Cares-and-Jersey-Child-Care-Trust.pdf \(jerseycares.je\)](https://www.jerseycares.gov.je/Response-to-Children-and-Young-Peoples-Law-and-guidance-Jersey-Cares-and-Jersey-Child-Care-Trust.pdf)

³ <https://www.gov.je/Caring/ChildrensRights/pages/jerseyandtheuncrc.aspx>

⁴ <https://statesassembly.gov.je/assemblypropositions/2022/p.19-2022.pdf>



This Government commits to keeping children in safe and loving homes⁵. We wish to add a note of caution to the expansion of children's homes as noted in the proposed budget. It needs to be better understood whether this is a crisis reaction to need, a lack of connected carers (living with friends and family) and foster carers, or a longer-term direction of travel. If a longer-term direction of travel, the rationale for this needs to be clearly evidenced. This must include the voice of children, young people and their families and evidence-based practice that this is in the best interests of the child.

A risk we regularly identify in the policy implementation gap across services, is 'delivery drift'. The intent of policy and legislation is often aligned with the best interests of children, young people, and their families, but delivery often becomes crisis driven (see negative flywheel), reactive and consequently ill-aligned to aspirational policy.

Our review of our advocacy data over four years shows 'family time' as a key issue for those who have experienced care. If we are to move away from family-based support and provision, we must ensure there is a best interests rationale for this.

We offer to support the Government and Ministers to work with people with experience of care to identify solutions to family support and foster carer recruitment.

2. CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE REFORM – NEW HOMES

We are concerned that the continued expansion and investment in children's home across the island does not necessarily align with best practice, the policy aspirations of government, and most importantly, what children and young people tell us is important to them. Children and young people tell us they want to spend quality time with their family and have nourished relationships with their brothers and sisters, and to have a stable home.

We welcome investment in a therapeutic children's home. Children have often told us that if meaningful therapeutic support had been provided early, their situation may not have escalated. We commend meaningful, considered and well-resourced progress on this.

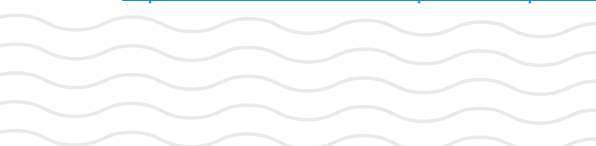
We have concerns that the additional £1.7 million investment specifically ringfenced for two new children's homes, has not been enough to meet demand. This has resulted in approximately £300K underspend being utilised from other services, such as children's social care reform, to enable them to operate as needed.

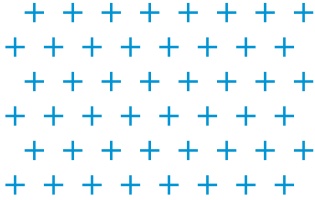
Funds for investment and specifically in this instance to support the re-design of children's social care in line with the recommendations of the Care Inquiry must be protected. The collective ambition to ensure all those with experience of care thrive must be enabled with the financial backing to become reality.

We must ensure that our actions are fuelling a 'positive flywheel' and meeting a fundamental human need to have family and belong. The Human & Economic Cost Modelling from The Promise Scotland⁶ emphasises the negative impact on individuals, families, services, and the wider community when services are positioned to predominantly respond to need rather than prevent and support.

⁵ <https://www.gov.je/Government/PlanningPerformance/GovernmentProgramme/GovernmentPlan/pages/governmentplan2024to2027.aspx>

⁶ <https://www.carereview.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Follow-the-money.pdf>





3. INVESTMENT ACROSS CYPES FRONTLINE SERVICES

Whilst noting the overall picture of an investment in services, inspection of budget proposals and the response from the Minister for Children and Education notes savings identified in the previous year and an ambition to save approximately £2.45 million in this coming year. We are concerned to see vacancies noted as savings and are particularly concerned that most of these posts were from within the Evaluation and Standards team. This team provides crucial internal accountability and holding of professional standards. Given the well-documented lack of meaningful challenge to poor practice, this team is crucial. We believe the Scrutiny Panel should challenge this definition of 'saving'. We believe it is crucial that funding for internal challenge is ringfenced.

For the year ahead, the Minister notes that most of the predicted savings will come from reductions in overtime and use of contract/agency staff. We would welcome a stable workforce. Children in care and care leavers often tell us that regular changes in social work staff is extremely difficult to manage, when they most need stability of support.

We would welcome input from the Government on how they plan to support the culture change needed to ensure long term suitable recruitment and retention of a skilled and supported workforce on island.

The Government has made significant investment in 'restorative practice'. Restorative practice is not simply a tool or a model for practice. It is a way of being - it is "how we do things round here". At its best, it drives an ability to be honest and provide and receive appropriate professional challenge, in service of a shared vision; in this instance enabling children to be loved and thrive. This should in turn lead to a high support, high challenge environment which will be a key feature of the 'roots' to enable transformative change.

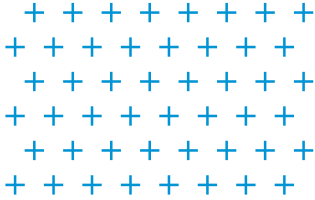
Our concern is that whilst there is ambition to recruit and retain skillsets on island, any gap in this delivery may result in:

- The living memory of policy and process that exists with these temporary staff may be lost and the aspirations of the service or the connections with families and individuals may be lost or reset, setting ongoing work back for a period of time.
- Reductions in service delivery without a transition to a more permanent approach will detrimentally impact on children, young people and their families.

4. INVESTMENT IN YOUNG PEOPLE WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION

We welcome the improved tracking mechanisms in place to ensure all young people can achieve their full potential via employment, education, or training. We would like to understand the breakdown of the 123 young people noted as not in employment, education or training. How many of them have experience of care? Is this number on par with previous years? If not, what has changed? Has the introduction of other services such as virtual schools had an impact on outcomes for children in care relating to their attainment? How is this measured?





We hope this information is readily available, however in the absence of it, we find it difficult to comment from a statistical perspective if positive change is happening. Education does continue to be one of the top themes of our advocacy data, with children in care noting they want to feel safe and supported at school, to have help to overcome barriers and progress in education. Again, we offer to work with Government and Ministers to explore with those who have lived experience to identify solutions to support children in care and care leavers to help them fulfil their potential.

The Plan for Government 2024-2027 has the potential to hugely change the lives for children in care, care leavers and those who have experienced care. However, policy ambition must be matched with adequate resourcing and supported workforce to enable it to be delivered. This must be rooted in the voices of lived experience. Without this, we will continue to experience the 'delivery drift' noted above.

The Care Leavers Offer, whilst a huge step forward to support care leavers, continues to be an example of this drift. This was launched as a statutory offer in February 2020⁷. It continues to be delivered inconsistently despite the collective efforts to ensure all care leavers can access the support they are entitled to. We have a particular concern regarding the policy intent for children in care and care leavers to have safe, stable loving homes into their early 20's versus some of the operational delivery of preparing young people to leave care at 18. Experiences in Jersey and elsewhere show this is rarely successful and lacks parity with peers without care-experience.

Further, the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry noted that young adults with care experience are often sent out early into a world with which 'they are singularly ill-equipped to cope'⁸. To be clear, this isn't from lack of resourcefulness or ability, rather a lack of connectedness and social networks. We must be careful we do not replicate the mistakes of the past.

Whilst we note the investment in children, young people, families and the services they use with interest, we are concerned of the apparent focus on expansion of residential care without a clear evidence base and in contrast to the ambition to support families to stay together. We would welcome clarity on the direction of travel that the Government intends to embark upon over the next few years.

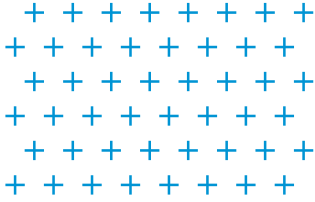
We welcome the focus on reducing the use of overtime and agency staff to provide a stronger, more empowered workforce to support communities across Jersey. This ambition however, has to be rooted in consistent models of restorative practice driven by a consistent senior leadership team. Without this consistency, services will continue to respond in crisis and struggle to retain staff, ultimately impacting on the support available to those who need it most.

Internal scrutiny must be invested in and protected. We welcome clarity from the Government on their plans to recruit staff to the Evaluation and Standards team to ensure this key function is delivered.

⁷ <https://www.gov.je/SiteCollectionDocuments/Caring%20and%20support/ID%20Guide%20for%20Young%20People%20Leaving%20Care%20JW.pdf>

⁸ IJCI, 2017, Exec Summary, 12.3 ix





All children and young people deserve the chance to reach their full potential. Whilst enhanced tracking of attainment may be positive, we would welcome further information on the same.

Jersey Cares will continue to be an independent voice for children in care, care leavers and adults with experience of care. We thank the Scrutiny Panel for their invitation to contribute and would welcome further dialogue on these crucial matters for Jersey's children.

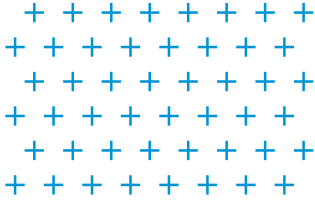
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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Alignment between policy priorities, advocacy themes (collated from four years of data) and the aspirations of senior leadership across Government

Policy Priority	Advocacy Theme	Implementation Aspiration
Ensuring all children and young people have the best education available to them, from early years through to adulthood	Education - want to feel safe and supported at school, to have help to overcome barriers and progress in education	<p>Continuing to modernise and enrich the Jersey curriculum to reflect the challenges of the modern-day world so that all children and young people are happy to learn and can go on to succeed and be the best that they can be, whatever their background or individual needs.⁹</p> <p>Recruiting more specialist staff to work with children to access the curriculum and continuing to develop our workforce to improve how we teach and support children and better target support where it is needed across inclusive schools.¹⁰</p>
Improving our social care services for children	Family time – to spend quality time with their family and have nourished relationships with brothers and sisters.	<p>Delivering system change so that we better support and care for our children. This will include delivering programmes which aim to keep children safely with their families and where this is not possible to provide a loving home for them. Our promise will be to ensure we all thrive together.¹¹</p> <p>Ensuring we have enough capacity to support our most vulnerable children and families, for those either in care or through preventative work and continuing to work with children and families to improve the quality of our services.¹²</p>

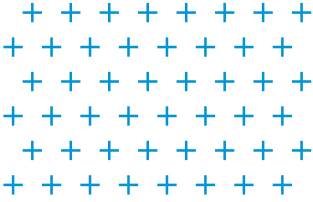
⁹ Plan for Government 2024-2027 (R.143/2023) pages 13-14

¹⁰ Plan for Government 2024-2027 (R.143/2023) pages 13-14

¹¹ Plan for Government 2024-2027 (R.143/2023) page 15

¹² Plan for Government 2024-2027 (R.143/2023) page 15





Policy Priority	Advocacy Theme	Implementation Aspiration
<p>Working in partnership to deliver a range of services for children and young people, families and communities</p>	<p>To be heard - to have a safe space to understand what is happening and share views, to build trusting relationships with professionals and to be involved in plans being made for their lives.</p>	<p>Developing ways to meaningfully involve and engage children and young people in delivering improvements to services by embedding participation standards across CYPES and introducing accountability and governance structures.¹³</p> <p>Ensuring all front facing CYPES services to children and young people are rights respecting.¹⁴</p>
<p>Developing and delivering a modern and effective youth justice policy by reviewing the findings of the previous youth justice reviews and the latest available evidence of effective practice, working with the Minister for Children and Education.</p>	<p>Nurturing and support in the Justice System - to be given opportunities to thrive and grow in prison, to have a safe and stable home to move to after prison support.</p>	<p>Reviewing service delivery models within the Prison for Education, Healthcare, Secure Custody of Young People and Rehabilitation by working with HCS, CYPES and the Probation and After-Care Service.¹⁵</p> <p>Supporting officers to take forward the departmental People and Culture, Strategic Workforce, Wellbeing and Diversity, and Equity and Inclusion plans, ensuring that public service values are demonstrated in everything we do.¹⁶</p>

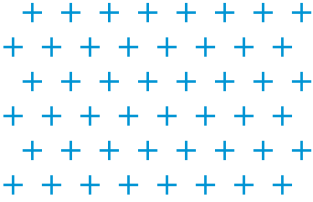
¹³ Plan for Government 2024-2027 (R.143/2023) page 15

¹⁴ Plan for Government 2024-2027 (R.143/2023) page 15

¹⁵ Plan for Government 2024-2027 (R.143/2023) page 41

¹⁶ Plan for Government 2024-2027 (R.143/2023) page 40





Appendix 2

THEMES FROM JERSEY CARES ADVOCACY OCT 2019 - OCT 2022



Family time

to spend quality time with their family and have nourished relationships with brothers and sisters.

To know your own history

to have access to personal records and see the full picture and for support to be provided for this.

To have a safe and stable home

to feel belonging, not to be moved between hotels and other temporary accommodation

Good mental health support

adults with experience of care tell us that their experience of care has a significant impact on their day-to-day life and wellbeing. There is a need for funding for good, highly skilled mental health support.

Education

to feel safe and supported at school, to have help to overcome barriers and progress in education

Nurturing and support in the Justice System

to be given opportunities to thrive and grow in prison, to have a safe and stable home to move to after prison support.



To be heard

to have a safe space to understand what is happening and share views, to build trusting relationships with professionals and to be involved in plans being made for their lives.

Financial support

to have the care needed. Government systems that are easy to navigate, young adults 'leaving care' tell us that they have difficulty getting the financial support needed and, often, promised.

