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Jersey | JE2 3RR

Mrs Deborah McMillan
Children's Commissioner
Office of the Children's Commissioner for Jersey
Brunel House
3 Old Street
St Helier
JE2 3RG

12 May 2020

Dear Commissioner,

Thank you for your letter dated 17 April. I understand you sent a similar letter to the Minister for Children and Housing and he is sending you a separate response.

As members of the Council of Ministers, both of us have promoted and received endorsement for our Common Strategic Policy within which we pledged to “put children first”. The 2020 Government plan included an ambitious range of projects using growth funding of over £20 million to support this pledge.

The events of the last few months have been without precedent. The government response to coronavirus has required urgent action across every area of government activity and presented challenges completely outside previous experience.

On 9 April, I announced a temporary GP contract for the duration of the Covid-19 emergency. Within this contract, GP services for all children under 5 will be provided free of charge with a flat fee of £10 for children and young people aged 5 to 17. Childhood immunisations remain free as they have been for some time. This compares with a consultation fee for adults and pensioners of £20. As you note, the total cost of a “pregnancy bundle” has been set at £120. This contract has been set up specifically to ensure the efficient use of all clinical staff and resources at this time of medical emergency and has required additional emergency funding of £4.4 million to cover a 4-month contract. Without patient fees being included in this contract, including the £10 fee for 5 to 17-year-olds, this emergency cost would have been higher, putting additional pressure on government funds.

Other initiatives taken by the Council of Ministers have included the launch of the Children and Families Hub (which was brought forward ahead of the planned timetable), additional protection to tenants, the introduction of financial support to adults and children with under 5 years' residence, and a major scheme to support payroll costs to keep parents and other workers in employment.

The focus of government at present must be on the immediate situation: the significant threat to human health and the enormous disruption to normal economic activity.

Within that context, the needs of children and young people remain a key concern. The new Hub provides additional support to children young people and families at this difficult time. Now

established, this service will continue beyond the Covid-19 emergency as an important element of government support for children.

I can reassure you that our pledge to “put children first” remains undiminished. Once the immediate threats have receded, it will be important to take stock and consider how the government best supports the island in its recovery. Our commitment to the UNCRC will be an important element of that planning.

In the meantime, if you have any immediate concerns regarding the position of children during the Covid-19 emergency, please raise them with me.

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. J. Renouf". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Deputy Richard Renouf
Minister for Health