



Children's Commissioner for Jersey

Promoting and Protecting Children's Rights

Office of the Children's Commissioner

Brunel House
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John Le Fondré
Chief Minister
Government of Jersey
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12 May 2021

Dear Chief Minister

Ref: Minister for Children and Education

I am writing with regard to the role of Minister for Children and Education and seeking reassurance of a commitment to appoint a 'full time' Minister as soon as possible following the announcement of temporary arrangements.

On 24th January I received a call from Charlie Parker who said that you had asked him to speak to me regarding your plan to split the Ministerial roles for Housing and Children and to form a combined role for Children and Education. I provided my advice and followed this up with a letter. My advice was to form a new Ministerial role with responsibility for all aspects of children's lives that mirrors the new Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department. In effect, a children's rights minister with a cross-cutting role to reflect the breadth of children's rights. This would mean that the Minister would be able to focus on joining up legislation, policy and practice development that seeks to ensure children's needs are understood and met, and the best interests of children are paramount. I offered to work with the appointee to provide training and guidance on children's rights as part of any induction, as well as an ongoing close working relationship with the Minister.

On 9th February Deputy Maçon was elected Minister for Children and Education, and on 1st March he appointed two Assistant Ministers: Deputy Pointon for CAMHS; and Deputy Wickenden to assist with the education portfolio.

On 24th March it was announced that, as Chief Minister, you had removed Deputy Maçon from these duties and that you would hold the portfolio for Children and Education until further notice. Deputy Wickenden took on additional responsibilities at that time.

I know that you have valued having dedicated Ministers for the roles of Education and Children, and I valued having a close working relationship with the previous post holders, which gave me the opportunity to spend time with them to provide guidance and advice. However, since January 2021 I have had little engagement with either Deputy

Maçon or Wickenden. My first meeting with Deputy Wickenden was on 22nd April (at my insistence) to discuss an urgent issue at Victoria College.

We agreed to hold regular catchup meetings so that I could go through key children's rights issues with him; however, Deputy Wickenden failed to turn up to the first of those meetings, with no apology or explanation given.

I appreciate that both Deputies hold wide portfolios and have a number of competing pressures, but I am concerned that the temporary arrangements that you have put in place have now resulted in a lack of ministerial oversight with regard to children and all aspects of their lives. I strongly recommend that you appoint a permanent role as a matter of urgency. The draft Children and Young people Mental Health Strategy, the Jersey Children's Social Care Services Plan, and the Children's Plan all set out a compelling vision and require committed, strong political leadership, particularly as we move into a recovery phase following the pandemic.

I would be pleased to discuss this further with you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D McMillan', with a stylized, cursive script.

Deborah McMillan

Children's Commissioner for Jersey