

19-21 Broad Street | St Helier
Jersey | JE2 3RR

14 June 2021

Deborah McMillan
Children's Commissioner for Jersey

Sent by email: commissioner@childcomjersey.org.je

Dear Deborah

Re: Independent Children's Homes Association Review of Residential Services

Thank you for your formal response to the above independent peer review of the Government of Jersey's homes for children and young people.

The review by was commissioned by the Department with the aim of seeking objective, third party insight into the effectiveness of the current residential provision, with an emphasis on ensuring independence from of those responsible for the delivery of the day-to-day operational management and leadership of the services.

Since the conclusion of the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry, progress has been made in relation to the experiences of the children in the care of the Minister. However, whilst recognising that the Registered Managers and the Child Care Officers in these homes are doing their best to support children in their care, it was considered that a review focused on these settings, and the provision of short break residential services, would assist in setting priorities and help with further planning to ensure continuous improvement of the children's experience of being in the care of the Minister. All the children living in the children's homes, the secure children's home and supported accommodation were offered the opportunity to give their views and, where these were forthcoming, these have been incorporated in the report.

The report recognises a good number of positives but, as expected, it also identifies areas for improvement - some of which the service has already implemented; and others the service is actively working on taking forward. In the remainder of this letter, I will comment on the issues you have highlighted in your response.

'The commissioner is alarmed to read that an inappropriate placement has been made in a supported accommodation home and that enforcement action for (sic) the Care Commissioner had not swiftly resolved the situation'.

It is agreed that the placement of the young person into this home had many challenges, some of which were not fully understood at the time the young person was placed. Had this been the case, other decisions may have been made. However, other significant considerations were also being taken into account. For example, the strong wish of this person to return to Jersey; and also to place him in a care setting that would minimise future moves. It is acknowledged that there have been difficulties for the staff caring for the young person and the service has had to give the

Jersey Care Commission ongoing commitments that measures were put in place to ensure the needs of the young person and those of the other residents in the home were met. I would like to provide reassurance that, due to the hard work and the commitment of the childcare officers in the home (and the wider team around the young person), the young person has settled well and is planning for adulthood.

The report

'The Commissioner is concerned to see continuing inappropriate use of the secure children's home despite significant advice being provided to end such use.'

'The Commissioner is concerned that children are being locked in rooms and are sleeping in rooms that were not designed as bedrooms with no bathroom facilities. This is inhumane and degrading treatment and are issues currently under review by the Commissioner.'

The children who are admitted to Greenfields are only able to do so if police bail is refused, pending a child's attendance before the Court (overnight detention), as part of a Court Ordered Sentence, or under a Secure Accommodation Order. Admittance through the Court process is monitored by the Placement Panel and Secure Accommodation Panel and is only used as a last resort and signed off by the Director of Children's Safeguarding and Care, after careful consultation with partner agencies. Any inappropriate use will be challenged, and the current Registered Manager at Greenfield is reviewing the policy for overnight detention at Greenfield with partner agencies to ensure full clarity of understanding.

You will also be familiar with the Secure Accommodation Group which has the objective of working towards a legislative resolution that will allow children and young people to be released from Secure Accommodation at the point of remission and as a condition of an early release scheme.

The development of Greenfields secure children's home is a priority for the service and immediate attention is being given to improving the environment for the children using Greenfields. Architect plans are being drawn up with the aim of reducing the number of bedrooms, enlarge each of the remaining (four) bedrooms and provide new on-suite facilities for each of these bedrooms.

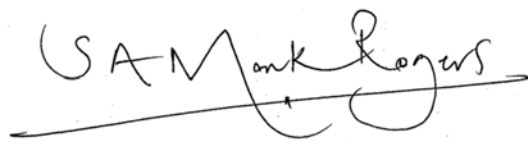
The improvement of the environment, the increase in staff numbers and a new operating model will improve the way the service works with the children in the secure children's home, will ensure better individualised care plans and, if appropriate, allow children to sleep in unlocked bedrooms.

I want to assure the Commissioner that the service is fully committed to improving all areas of provision: the secure children's home; children's homes; and supported accommodation. Whilst the Minister is seeking to reduce further the use of children's homes as a placement option through, for example, the provision of more extensive and effective early help and through the roll-out of intensive fostering arrangements, it is recognised that for some children a children's home can be an appropriate choice and positive experience. It is recognised that these homes should be an important focus under the relational and developmental trauma umbrella as they provide care for the most vulnerable, complex and marginalised children.

As a result of the ICHA report and other recommendations, including feedback from the Jersey Care Commission, a new Children's Home Improvement Plan is being formulated. The Minister and officials absolutely agree that securing the rights of children and, especially, hearing their voice is essential to true participation and engagement and we will work hard to ensure that the Children's Homes Improvement Plan reflects this ambition.

If you would like to meet and discuss these matters further, please do not hesitate to get back in touch.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "SAM Mark Rogers". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the left from the start of the name.

Mark Rogers
Director General

Government of Jersey - Children, Young People, Education and Skills
19-21 Broad Street | St Helier | Jersey | JE2 3RR
T: +44 (0)1534 449486
E: m.rogers@gov.je
W: www.gov.je