



## **Children's Commissioner for Jersey** Promoting and Protecting Children's Rights

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### **Office of the Children's Commissioner**

Brunel House  
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19 April 2021

Paul Martin  
Chief Executive Officer  
Government of Jersey  
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Dear Paul

Thank you for taking the time to visit the Office of the Children's Commissioner. My regular meetings with Charlie were important and I do hope that we can continue to meet regularly too.

We discussed several issues and you asked me if children were safe on the island. I did say that I would be writing to you to set out my concerns in writing so that we can have a more formal conversation about them.

I have urgent concerns regarding these areas that are intrinsically linked:

- High number of exclusions from schools
- Increasing rate of youth crime
- High number of missing children
- Low number of children on the MASE list
- High numbers of children awaiting CAMHS

I have copied in Robin Smith as he shares my concerns.

- The rate of youth crime has been rising since 2019 but during 2020 the number of arrests increased by 104% and during 2021 continues to rise and is escalating.
- There are repeated, predictable episodes of missing children. Too many of them are in the care of the Minister who are living in residential children's homes. Some are missing overnight and some for several nights. In the last 30 days there have been 101 missing children reports.

- There are a low number of children on the MASE list (Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation) yet the number of missing children reports suggests many more may be at risk of exploitation.
- There are too many children being excluded from school on a repeated basis. Fixed term school exclusions at Government of Jersey secondary schools has risen from 350 instances in 2014/15 to 911 in 2018/19. Clearly, these figures are too high. The predominant reason for exclusion was verbal abuse and the use of threatening behaviour against teachers.
- The CAMHS caseload is currently 841 with 29 children waiting for an assessment. 74 children have been assessed and are on a waiting list for therapy. 61 children are on a waiting list for an ADHD assessment.

None of these issues were raised nor discussed at the last Children's Strategic Leadership Board.

I am also concerned about the level and quality of external challenge to CYPES but, in particular, to children's social care and I have discussed this with the Chair of the Care Commission and the Chair of the Safeguarding Partnership Board.

My main concerns are:

- The improvement plan 'The Children's Service – Our Plan 2020 -23 (DRAFT)' was presented to the Strategic Leadership Board in February 2020 and is still in draft format and has not been published
- The report on children's homes from the ICHA is still not published
- The lack of critical challenge in the Independent Social Worker Advisor Reports
- The performance data is not widely published and the information shared with the Board has limited written analysis. In the last Board meeting there was a presentation and some comment, but very little challenge. Performance data was compared with the UK as a whole rather than any relevant statistical grouping
- External membership of the Board is limited and in the last meeting no third sector representation attended and strategic governance is confused
- There was no Board meeting from June 2020 until March 2021 at a time when there ought to have been forensic oversight of children's services
- The March 2021 Board meeting lacked focus and at times was confused with the role of the Children's Strategic Partnership Board meetings
- The pace of change has not been enough to address critical weaknesses and the impact of Covid on this has not given sufficient emphasis
- Experiences and voices of children in care, and CiN and CPP are not represented in the data dashboard on performance
- Policy and powers in children's homes make it difficult for staff members to 'parent' children
- The Safeguarding Partnership Board review in 2018 made a number of recommendations yet the pace of improvement of the SPB is slow
- Ministerial oversight is weak with disconnect between ministerial portfolios
- Not all of the Ofsted recommendations have been addressed

There does seem to be a paralysis in the system with officers seemingly powerless to effect change. Therefore, I ask you if you can be assured that oversight of children's services is robust with sufficient rigour and direction?

I would welcome a meeting with yourself and the Children's Minister to discuss these concerns as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D McMillan', enclosed within a faint, light-colored rectangular border.

**Deborah McMillan**  
Children's Commissioner for Jersey

c.c. Robin Smith, Police Chief Officer