4.14 Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement of the Minister for Children and Families regarding exploitation and grooming of children in Jersey. (OQ.115/2026)

Further to Written Question 145/2026, will the Minister advise what progress, if any, has been made regarding understanding and addressing the issue of children in Jersey being exposed to exploitation and grooming?

Connétable R.P. Vibert of St. Peter (The Minister for Children and Families):

I thank the Deputy for the question. The original question of course had 5 sub-sections, so there was quite a lengthy answer to that, but I will try to keep this brief. While no new formal measures have been introduced since the previous update in July, work has been undertaken across the partnership to increase awareness and understanding of R.O.T.H. (Risk Outside the Home) and strengthen the multi-agency response to extrafamilial harm. Between 14th October and 16th October colleagues from Southampton City Council visited Jersey to engage with key partner agencies and share learning on R.O.T.H. Southampton is seen as, in effect, almost the gold standard in the U.K. in dealing with this area. The visit provided a valuable opportunity to enhance awareness and understand multi-agency collaboration. Discussions focused on early intervention, missing children, assessment and planning, processing, disruption activity and the development of diversionary approaches to reduce vulnerability and improve outcomes for children. Since the visit there has been a noticeable strengthening of partnership working across our agencies - and this is very positive - and an improved awareness of the understanding of R.O.T.H. As I said, this is a positive foundation for a new pathway to be developed in Jersey. As of 31st October 2026, 69 children were receiving some level of support from Children's Services in relation to exploitation risks. In July the figure was 63. I stress that the number varies and therefore we should not draw any conclusions from that increase. There are no changes to where responsibility lies for the co-ordination of services for at-risk children when multiple agencies, including schools, are involved since my previous answer in July, and I am satisfied with those arrangements. Answer to (d) in the previous question, mechanisms in the …

The Bailiff:

I think (d) is gone and your answer has now got to 2 minutes, Minister. Thank you very much. A supplementary, Deputy Wilson?

4.14.1 Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Does the Minister, based on what he has just said, now have a sufficiently accurate picture of the scale and nature of child grooming and exploitation in Jersey, including sexual and criminal exploitation? What gaps remain, in his understanding?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

I think when we look at exploitation and safeguarding we have to consider that it is constantly moving. While today we recognise the issues that surround us, new safeguarding areas become apparent. It is something where we cannot rest on our laurels and we have to keep working on this constantly and updating it. I am satisfied where we are at the moment. I believe there is work to be done but, as I say, it is a constantly moving and very complex area. I thank the Deputy for the question.

The Bailiff:

I have a question now from Deputy Tadier and then a final supplementary from Deputy Wilson, as there are a number of questions still to get through and time is getting shorter.

4.14.2 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

I think the question is timely and my question is to the Minister. Given that there will clearly be an overlap here from the good work and the necessary work which is going on with the V.A.W.G. (Violence Against Women and Girls) project, would he emphasise the fact that there is a potential risk that violence and sexual exploitation of boys could be forgotten and that we need to be, and society needs to be, vigilant to that

possibility? Also to make sure that in the messaging that goes out, perhaps even consider the message should be preventing violence against women and children.

The Connétable of St. Peter:

Of course we do recognise that area and it is one where certainly there have been cases in the past. It is not an area that is ignored. We can think about perhaps a change in the title, but I do not think that diminishes from the fact that we already have that area adequately covered at present.

4.14.3 Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Would the Minister agree that the Assembly might need some stronger independent assurance that the arrangements that he has just outlined and described are effective in identifying victims, disrupting the perpetrators and preventing further exploitation? Would he consider commissioning such a review of that kind?

The Connétable of St. Peter:

I think I have been asked this question before about a review. I do not consider that necessary at this time. The service is regularly inspected, including this area, and we take note of the recommendations from those independent inspections. I feel that certainly the timing, that level of scrutiny is sufficient.