
STATES OF JERSEY



REVIEW OF THE STATUTORY YOUTH SERVICE

**Presented to the States on 30th March 2026
by the Minister for Children and Families**

STATES GREFFE

REPORT

Introduction

This report has been prepared to present the findings of the evaluation required under Proposition P.28/2024, as amended. Its purpose is to set out the work undertaken, the evidence considered and the conclusions reached in response to the obligations placed on the Minister for Children and Families by the States Assembly.

Under the amended proposition, the Assembly requested the Minister to undertake an evaluation, with input from young people, the Youth Service and the Parishes, to consider the benefits and disbenefits of making the Jersey Youth Service a statutory service under the Minister, or successor in title, and to explore whether this should be delivered through the Education (Jersey) Law 1999 or other legislation as appropriate. The Assembly also directed that the results of the evaluation be brought back by the end of March 2026, with any actions requiring funding to be incorporated into the 2027 Government Plan.

The evaluation was required because the original proposition sought to place the Youth Service on a statutory footing to strengthen its long-term protection, ensure consistency of provision and prevent future reductions or removal of services. The amendment sought a full evaluation of the implications be carried out before any decision was made on whether to place the service onto a statutory footing.

The scope of this review is therefore limited to evaluating the benefits and disbenefits of statutory status, informed by engagement with key groups and supported by relevant legal and financial advice. It does not extend to drafting legislation, altering operational structures, or making decisions about future service delivery models, all of which would fall outside the remit set by the amended proposition.

Background

Proposition P.28/2024 sought to require the Minister for Children and Families to prepare law drafting instructions to make the Youth Service a statutory service enshrined in the Education (Jersey) Law 1999, with implementation by January 2026. Its stated purpose was to ensure continued protection and stability of Youth Service provision by embedding it in legislation. The accompanying report emphasised the importance of safeguarding the service from potential future reductions in funding and noted previous political support for statutory status.

The proposition described the service as an essential part of Jersey's provision for children and young people, contributing to the outcomes of the Children and Young People's Plan 2019–2023, including safety, learning, healthy lives and involvement. It highlighted that the proposal would not alter operational models, ownership or parish-based arrangements but would provide assurance that the service could not be diminished due to shifting governmental priorities.

The amended proposition, lodged by the Minister for Children and Families, replaced the requirement to issue law drafting instructions with a requirement to undertake an evaluation.

The amendment clarified that input should include, but not be limited to, young people, the Youth Service and Parishes. It also required the Minister to consider both the benefits and the disbenefits of statutory status, provided flexibility regarding which legislation might be appropriate, and established a clear reporting deadline of March 2026. This approach ensures that the evaluation is thorough and balanced, supporting careful consideration of potential impacts so that any future decisions avoid unintended consequences.

Approach to the Evaluation

The evaluation drew on discussions with Youth Service staff, financial officers and legal officers to gather insight into the practical, financial and legislative implications of making the Youth Service a statutory service. This included consideration of legislative approaches in the United Kingdom.

Discussions focused on a range of factors relevant to understanding the potential impact of statutory status, including the anticipated benefits, possible disadvantages, implications for funding, the nature of protections that statutory status might provide and what the change could mean in practice for the relationship between the Youth Service and the Parishes.

The information gathered was used to develop an informed assessment based on professional experience, operational understanding and officer expertise. The evaluation was proportionate to the scope set by the amended proposition and intended to support a balanced understanding of the potential effects of legislative change.

Engagement

Engagement for the purposes of this evaluation involved targeted discussions with those best placed to provide relevant operational, legal and financial perspective. This included Youth Service staff who were able to explain how the service currently operates and the importance of flexibility in adapting provision to meet changing needs; financial officers who provided advice on funding considerations and the potential budgetary impacts of statutory status; and legal officers who advised on the legislative considerations and risks associated with embedding service duties in law.

The findings from these discussions were shared with the Comité des Connétables to support collective understanding of the key issues. Engagement also included tailored conversations with young people to gather their views on the essential elements of the youth service and the aspects they believe must be protected if the service were to be legally mandated. These discussions sought to explore their views on the appropriate balance between the protections offered through establishing a legal obligation for the service to exist and the risk of reducing the flexibility needed to adapt provision over time.

Insights from all engagement activities helped shape the evaluation and ensured that the perspectives of those directly involved in delivering, supporting or using the service were taken into account.

Legal Considerations

Given the Youth Service is primarily of an educational nature the Education (Jersey) Law 1999 was considered the most appropriate route for placing the service into primary legislation. This would also align Jersey with approaches taken in England and Wales where youth services are provided for under education-related legislation.¹ Consideration was given to the Children and Young People (Jersey) Law 2022, but this was deemed less suitable. Legislating for the service under the Education Law would have the unintended effect of transferring responsibility from the Minister for Children and Families to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning.

Legal advice highlighted that establishing statutory duties on the Minister for the provision of Youth Services may have unintended implications for service delivery. Embedding prescriptive service requirements in legislation could reduce the flexibility currently available to adapt provision in response to changing needs or emerging priorities.

The Law Officers' Department also advised that establishing such statutory duties could create overly burdensome bureaucracy within the service.

Financial Considerations

The original proposition suggested consideration be given to the introduction of a per-head funding formula like that applied to schools. In considering this proposal officers highlighted that school numbers are relatively stable because attendance is a legal requirement, whereas youth service participation is voluntary and can vary widely.

Per-head formulas can create inequities where population distribution varies. For example, the youth population in St Helier is much higher compared to rural parishes like St Mary.² In practice, pooled allocations in areas with a lower population of young people, may not cover the full cost of enrichment activities needed to provide a consistent experience across all areas, even though the formula appears fair on paper.

Most of the funding for the service comes from the central budget for Children, Young People, Education and Skills. This funding covers staffing and operational costs. The remaining funding is provided through parish partnerships where contributions from parishes are ring fenced for use for services delivered in those parishes only. The parish partnership arrangements mean that per head funding varies across parishes depending on both the number of young people accessing that particular service and the amount of funding allocated by the parish at any given time.

Introducing a consistent per head allocation would, in practice, likely require all funding to come from a single budget. This could reduce total available funds if parish contributions were removed, or it could still result in inconsistent funding if some parishes chose to continue allocating extra money to their local service.

Financial advice confirmed that a **statutory provision would not guarantee a minimum level of funding** for the service. Under the Public Finances Manual, Accountable Officers are required to achieve savings outlined in approved budgets.³ Statutory status of a service does not exempt officers from this obligation and therefore provides no guarantee that future budgets will be protected from reductions or inflation-linked erosion in value.

Finance officers noted that this could affect the long-term financial viability of the service if funding requirements exceed available resources or if wider budget pressures make it difficult to maintain service levels required under legislation.

Findings of the Evaluation

The evaluation identified several key matters for consideration:

- **Flexibility of service delivery:** Legislative change could significantly reduce the ability of the Youth Service to adapt provision over time. Current flexibility supports responsiveness to changing needs and the development of new approaches; statutory duties may limit this by imposing fixed obligations.
- **Financial implications:** Statutory status does not guarantee a minimum level of funding, yet it could increase pressure on the service if it is required to meet legal duties without the budget needed to do so.
- **Legal exposure:** Creating a statutory duty introduces the possibility of legal challenge if the service is perceived not to meet requirements set out in law, statutory guidance or published policy. This could lead to unintended bureaucracy and increased administrative burden in deploying youth services.
- **Relationship with Parishes:** If Parish contributions are not clearly safeguarded for use within the contributing Parish, this may lead to concern or dissatisfaction, particularly in Parishes that perceive themselves as contributing a greater proportion of funding than others. It must be stated that the relationships with Parishes in not just one of funding. A strong, collaborative relationship between a youth club and the relevant Parish, brings wide-ranging advantages for local children and young people, such as Parish support for the youth club, young people involved in Parish events, children and young people having a voice, belonging and safe space to meet with peers in their community or young people getting involved in volunteering. The Youth worker is also a resource for the Parish should any issues arise involving young people with the youth worker able to provide early interventions and preventative work to avoid anti-social behaviour or young people getting involved with crime.
- **Comité des Connétables not supportive:** In a meeting on Monday 9th March 2026, the Comité reached a unanimous view that they do not support making the Youth Service a statutory service, citing concerns about loss of parish involvement, increased administrative burdens, future centralisation of youth provision, and potential impacts on the parish-based delivery model.

Overall, while statutory status could signal strong commitment to youth provision, the evaluation found that it may also introduce constraints, risks and financial pressures.

Conclusion

The evaluation identified a potential benefit in establishing a legal duty for the service to exist, but it also highlighted significant risks, particularly regarding reduced operational flexibility, financial sustainability and legal exposure. Importantly, **statutory status would not achieve the aim of the original proposition**, which was to secure a minimum level of funding for the service regardless of changing priorities of future governments. Creating a statutory service would not make the Youth Service exempt from wider requirements to deliver savings set out in future approved budgets.

In light of these findings, the Minister for Children and Families has concluded that the significant risks introduced by making the Youth Service a statutory provision far outweigh the potential benefits. As such the Minister for Children and Families has decided not to progress legislative drafting to change the status of the service.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Feedback from the Comité des Connétables

The Assistant Minister for Children and Families, alongside the Associate Director for Young People's Services and the Head of Youth Service attended the Comité des Connétables on Monday 9th March 2026.

The Assistant Minister for Children and Families presented a paper to the Comité des Connétables and sought views on the positives and negatives associated with the proposition. These views are summarised below.

Positives

1 Connétable commented that they and their parish would continue to support the local youth project.

Negatives

- Risk to funding - Parishioners might not want to financially support a statutory Government of Jersey service
- Increased administrative and compliance burden
- More bureaucracy
- Responsiveness - Youth work delivered at parish level is characterised by its responsiveness to local needs of children and young people, informality, and ability to strengthen local identity. With the service being statutory it may lose those local needs element.
- Relational practice - If the Youth Service was statutory, it may reduce flexibility and hinder relationship between Parish and Government.

Other comments

- Better long-term planning and funding alignment - consideration should be given to create longer Parish Partnerships – 9 years similar the refuse collection contracts.
- The Comité des Connétables commented that “we don't have a problem with the current arrangements, why make any changes when things are running well.”
- The Comité recognises and values the outstanding contribution that the Youth Service makes in partnership with the relevant Parishes to young people across Jersey. Parishes work closely with Youth Service teams and regard them as essential partners in supporting young people within their Parish.
- The current collaborative model is both longstanding and effective.
- The Comité des Connétables reached a unanimous view that they do not support making the Youth Service a statutory service, citing concerns about loss

of parish involvement, increased administrative burdens, future centralisation of youth provision, and potential impacts on the parish-based delivery model.

Appendix 2: Feedback from Engagement with Young People

Wednesday 25th February 2026 – 16:00 to 17:00

Introduction

A consultation session was held with young people to gather their views on the essential elements of the youth service and the aspects they believe must be protected if the service were to be legally mandated. Participants also identified the components of the service that have the greatest impact on them and their peers.

1. If the youth service had to exist by law, what parts must be protected so young people don't miss out?

Essential Elements to Protect

- **Youth Clubs in every parish**
To ensure easy access, a sense of belonging, and opportunities within local communities.
- **Support for young people who need help**
A place to talk about problems and receive guidance when facing challenges.
- **Outdoor learning and outdoor learning sites**
Activities that support physical health, mental wellbeing, and connection with nature.
- **Culture Club**
A space that embraces differences, celebrates diversity, and provides support for those who need it.
- **Targeted support**
Help for young people facing additional or more complex challenges.
- **Focused work with individuals or small groups**
Helps young people feel more comfortable around others, builds confidence, and supports their wellbeing.
- **Informal education**
Hands-on, practical learning in the right environment – unique opportunities that prepare young people for the future.

2. What parts of the youth service make the biggest difference to you and your friends – the things you absolutely cannot lose?

- **“Everything – it's like a big jigsaw puzzle. If you lose one piece, it won't be complete.”**
- **Keeping projects individual and unique**
Each project has its own identity, purpose, and group of young people who rely on it.
- **Youth Committees**
These are *super important* because they:
 - Give young people a voice in decision making
 - Allow them to influence funding
 - Support opportunities such as:
 - Young worker T-shirts
 - Trips and residentials
 - Awareness raising events

- Activities created *by* young people, *for* young people