

Friday 14th November 2025

Dear Deputy Curtis and the Scrutiny Panel

I am writing in response to your request to Jersey Cares, dated 29 October 2025, seeking comments on the Government's proposed 2026–2029 budget, specifically regarding the additional expenditure for the Children's Services Improvement Programme.

We note that the terms of reference for this review, which we have been invited to comment on, cover the following areas:

- The impact of the budget proposals on departmental budgets, savings, and staffing levels
- Whether the revenue expenditure, growth, capital, and other projects are appropriate and likely to have a positive impact on Islanders and Island life
- How the proposed revenue expenditure growth, capital, and projects align with the Common Strategic Policy to deliver on priorities and in line with the Departments' Business Plans
- Whether the resources allocated to revenue expenditure growth and capital and other projects are sufficient, ensure value for money, and demonstrate the best use of public funds

As an independent organisation commissioned by the Government to amplify the voice of the child by providing independent advocacy to children in care and care leavers (as well as an independently funded service for those with care experience), we consider ourselves well placed to comment on sections B and C of the request: impact on Islanders and Island life, and alignment of the proposed work with priorities for the children we represent. Other than our experience of being commissioned as a service, we do not consider ourselves well placed to comment on wider budget impact or value for money.

We understand that the budget allocates a significant increase in investment for services for children and young people—£7.6 million in 2026—raising the total expenditure for children's services to £58 million. An additional £12 million in

capital expenditure is earmarked for the Children's Homes Estates Improvement Plan ('Loving Homes').

The rationale for this increased funding is to focus on our most vulnerable young Islanders by improving financial support for Children's Services, both for the provision of improved care and with capital investment to modernise residential facilities. The 'Loving Homes' project aims to achieve new and improved residential care facilities for children, as quoted in the budget:

'Loving Homes Estate is part of a wider whole-system change intended to significantly expand and modernise Jersey's residential care capacity, ensuring children and young people have safe, stable homes that meet their needs. Building on the progress made since the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry, the plan will reshape the residential estate to deliver a high-quality, sustainable model of care on-Island. The investment includes new residential homes to increase sufficiency, specialist provision including upgrades to the secure children's home, and supported accommodation for young people preparing for independence.'

Based on our meetings with young people and published reviews, we have significant concerns about conditions at Greenfields. Until recently, it felt like the worst aspects of a prison—without the safety benefits—due to the building's fabric and certain internal processes. It has neither been a place where people feel at home nor safe. We are pleased to see included in the plan a goal to provide proper outdoor and learning spaces for children confined to a closed home, funding to improve the building, and the creation of a specialist hub to support young people earlier and reduce the risk of coming into restrictive, secure accommodation in the first place.

We are pleased to see a proposal to improve the experience for foster families, including adopting the 'Mockingbird' model to help foster parents support one another. We hope this will increase recruitment and retention of foster homes on the island, reducing the need for children to be moved to homes in England without a specific reason.

We also welcome improvements to the IT application 'MOSAIC' and hope this leads to better integrated social care and improved documentation of children's care and learning, enabling them to have a fuller understanding of their life story in the future.

Consistency and continuity between young people and professionals are vital. We are pleased to see recognition of this and plans to ensure more of the workforce in children's services are directly employed on permanent contracts

by the Government of Jersey, alongside investment in ongoing training and development, including growing skills in local people who are more likely to remain in Jersey.

We asked a young person with care experience for their input on this submission. They said:

‘There does still need to be improvement in children’s services and in providing stable loving homes so this is a good thing, but there are only a small number of children live in children’s homes and there are other bits of the experience of being in care that are still not right. I can remember being told in the last few years that money was being spent on children’s homes and that Greenfields would improve, but it didn’t make a big difference then—so how can we be sure that more money will make a big difference now? I would be keen to know if more money is being spent on children’s services, where will the money come from and what other ways might that make life challenging for us as Islanders in the future?’ — R

In conclusion, while Jersey Cares is not best placed to comment on the overall value for money of the plan (beyond our experience of a recent commissioning process demonstrating strong commitment to efficiency), as a provider of Independent Advocacy for children in care and care leavers, we fully support the proposed increase in revenue and capital funding for children’s services. Provided there is robust oversight of spending and delivery of outcomes, these projects are critical to addressing persistent shortcomings for children in care and are likely to have a positive impact on Islanders and Island life in the short, medium, and long term, committing to a strategic and sustainable solution over the next five years.

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to the scrutiny of this funding proposal

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