Office of the Children's Commissioner for Jersey

Response to the Public Accounts Committee

Arm's Length Bodies, Grants and Subsidies Review

Note: Questions numbered as in original request

7. Please can you confirm the total income of your organisation for each of the past 5 years.

Year	Income
2025	£1,009,668
2024	£1,014,049
2023	£944,500
2022	£954,742
2021	£738,000

Also, please can you provide details of:

a. **The total and percentage of your funding over each of the past 5 years that was provided by the Government of Jersey or Government funded bodies (including charitable funds administered by Government).**

The Office of the Children's Commissioner is wholly funded by the Government of Jersey.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner is an independent human rights organisation established under the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Jersey) Law 2019. Under the Schedule of this Law, Article 9(i) provides that

9 Staff and resources of Commissioner

(1) The States must ensure that the Commissioner is provided with such financial and administrative resources, and other support, including staff, services, equipment and accommodation, so as to enable the Commissioner to discharge his or her functions under this Law, or under any other enactment, properly and effectively.

This is comparable with other human rights institutions across Europe. National human rights bodies do not, in the majority of instances, rely on fee-charging or fund-raising activities for

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financial support. In line with the Paris Principles, which the OCCJ adheres to, the purpose of such adequate funding also serves to ensure the independence of the office in the performance of its functions.

b. The total and percentage of your funding that you have raised yourself over each of the past 5 years (please detail the manner in which this was raised e.g. through fundraising events, membership, private funds and organisations etc.). Where received through private funds and organisations please could you specify where this was received from.

The OCCJ is not and has never been in receipt of funding other than from the Government of Jersey.

8. Please can you confirm the ultimate objective of your organisation.

The ultimate objective of the Office of the Children's Commissioner is to promote and protect the rights of children and young people in Jersey, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and other relevant international human rights treaties that Jersey has ratified.

The statutory basis for this objective is set out in the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Jersey) Law 2019. This law establishes the Commissioner as an independent human rights institution – the first and only such body in Jersey – with a specific mandate to advance and uphold the rights of children and young people.

The creation of the Office was a direct recommendation of the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry, which identified the absence of a strong, independent body to safeguard children's rights as a critical weakness in Jersey's past systems of care and protection. Establishing the Commissioner's Office was therefore an essential part of addressing those failings and ensuring that children are never again left without a dedicated voice to champion their rights and interests.

In fulfilling this statutory objective, the Commissioner has a unique role distinct from other Arms-Length Bodies in Jersey. We are not a regulator, inspectorate, or service provider. Instead, our role is that of an independent human rights institution, combining two essential functions:

- *Accountability:* Providing robust scrutiny of laws, policies, and practices, and holding duty-bearers to account when children's rights are not upheld.

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- *Constructive Promotion of Rights*: Acting as a positive and proactive voice to promote awareness, understanding, and implementation of children's rights across government, public services, and the wider community.

This combination of scrutiny and constructive engagement is what distinguishes the Office of the Children's Commissioner from other public bodies. It enables us not only to identify shortcomings and challenge failings, but also to work collaboratively with decision-makers and service providers to bring about lasting improvements in the lives of children and young people.

The overarching purpose of the Office is therefore to ensure that the promotion and protection of children's rights is a part of public life in Jersey by working to ensure that children's rights are respected in law, realised in practice and that the voices of children and young people themselves are heard, valued, and acted upon in the decisions that affect their lives.

9. Please can you provide details of the Key Performance Indicators you have as an organisation (both internal and any set by the Government of Jersey) and how you measure the success or otherwise of these indicators.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People (Jersey) Law 2019 requires the office to publish a strategic plan every four years. The current strategic plan can be found at occj-strategic-plan-2024.pdf. This identifies seven key strands of work for the office over the four years from 2024 to 2027, in line with our statutory functions and duties. Each individual strand of work is transferred to a business plan on an annual basis, actions and tasks attached to these and associated KPIs set.

KPIs are integral to our Business Plan but are susceptible to changes in available resources and staffing, as well as changes in the Government's operations and priorities. As such we do not publish our Business Plan and KPIs as a matter of course. However, a redacted version can be provided to the PAC on request.

Progress, success or failure in meeting these KPIs in measured and monitored through monthly staff activity reports, performance management and annual reporting. At any stage during this continuous process, KPIs may be deemed inappropriate to the work in hand but must be replaced with more appropriate indicators.

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c. Have your KPIs changed since your initial objectives were set?

The ultimate objectives of the OCCJ do not change; however, the priorities and actions undertaken to progress meeting these objectives must change to reflect emerging issues and changing priorities in each four-year plan. KPIs change in line with changes in priorities and activities.

d. Do you have any KPIs set for funding received external to Government?

The OCCJ does not receive funding external from Government, therefore no KPIs are necessary here.

10. (Please answer if applicable) What decision-making processes do you follow to award bonuses to Senior Executives within your organisation? e. Please can you also provide details of the discretionary payments made to Senior Executives over the past 5 years and, where possible, provide this as separate figures for bonus payments and redundancy/severance payments etc.

Not Applicable.

11. Please can you provide details of the governance arrangements within your organisation both at an executive and, if relevant, non-executive level. Please also specify if you follow a particular governance framework (e.g. ISO, KING 4 etc.)

The OCCJ has three statutory advisory panels: the Adult Advisory Panel (AAP); the Audit and Risk Advisory Panel (ARAP); and the Youth Advisory Group (YAG). The role of the ARAP is defined in the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Jersey) Law 2019 as "[providing] *the Commissioner with advice and assistance in relation to… the use of resources by the office, the management of risk by the office, and the governance of the office*."

The most relevant of these panels to the PAC is the ARAP (see below), although the other two advisory panels also contribute to the Office's governance arrangements. The AAP does this by providing governance oversight in relation to the financial and non-financial operation of the Office – this can range from professional and legal insights into the viability and suitability of certain projects, through to advice relating to the value for money of particular aspects of the Office's work programme. The YAG, meanwhile, is there to ensure that the OCCJ always

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maintains the direct involvement of children and young people in its work programme, thereby guaranteeing that this essential aspect of the Office's statutory function is fulfilled.

However, the ARAP remains the most governance-focused of the advisory panels, and has fulfilled its function effectively and diligently, always satisfying – and, most commonly, exceeding – its statutory requirement of four meetings a year. In 2024, the Panel met on five occasions, covering (among other topics):

- the updating of the format and content of the OCCJ's risk register, to include inherent risk and risk appetite, in addition to residual risk and risk trend;
- the terms of reference for the Panel, which were updated in consultation with the Chief Minister, as required and agreed with the Panel (see here);
- budget constraints and internal accounting processes;
- a self-assessment tool for Panel members to ensure that the Panel and the OCCJ are acting in line with their purpose and terms of reference;
- review and updating of OCCJ policies in line with statutory requirements and best practice.

In addition, the ARAP published its first Non-Executive Members' Report in 2024 (available here), and one of the Panel's members sat on the steering group that oversaw a proposed restructure of the OCCJ.

Another of the OCCJ's formal governance arrangements is the *Framework Agreement Between the Office of the Children's Commissioner for Jersey and Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance* (available here). This document, which is reviewed and signed off by the Children's Commissioner and the Accountable Officer of SPPP, sets out *"arrangements to ensure that effective corporate governance arrangements are in place, supported by effective internal controls that demonstrate value for money."*

12. How do you meet the principles set out within the Public Finances Manual and how do you monitor your performance against these principles?

The Office of the Children's Commissioner is committed to meeting the principles set out in the Jersey Public Finances Manual (PFM). While the Office is an independent statutory body established by the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Jersey) Law 2019 (the Commissioner's Law), we are fully cognisant that we are funded by public resources and

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therefore must uphold the highest standards of financial stewardship, accountability, and transparency in the way those funds are managed.

Public Value

- Our budget is allocated directly to activities that promote, protect, and uphold children's rights, ensuring that expenditure is aligned to our statutory remit.
- Strategic and annual business planning enables to prioritise areas where we can have the greatest impact.
- We follow Government of Jersey procurement guidelines to ensure all contracts and purchasing decisions are fair, competitive, and compliant with best practice. This includes securing value for money, using approved supplier frameworks where appropriate, and documenting procurement decisions transparently.

Sustainability

- We operate within the budget envelope approved by the States Assembly and take a prudent approach to long-term commitments, ensuring that recurrent expenditure is sustainable.
- Multi-year financial planning is undertaken alongside strategic planning so that we can anticipate future resource needs and adjust activities accordingly.
- Any identified risks to financial sustainability are recorded in our risk register and actively managed.

Accountability

- The Office has established governance arrangements for financial management, including segregation of duties, financial authorisation thresholds, and clear procurement protocols.
- Our Audit and Risk Advisory Panel (a requirement under the Commissioner's Law) provides independent oversight and challenge on matters of financial management, risk, and governance, helping to ensure that internal controls are robust and that the Office maintains the highest standards of accountability.
- We are mindful of our duty to demonstrate that public funds are used only for their intended purpose and in a way that commands public confidence.

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Transparency:

- Expenditure is recorded, monitored, and reported in accordance with government requirements, through use of Government systems and through review with our Treasury Business Partner.
- Annual reports, including audited accounts, are laid before the States Assembly, as required by Law, ensuring open accountability for the use of funds.

Monitoring performance against the PFM principles:

- We maintain an ongoing dialogue with our Treasury Business Partner, which involves the preparation of regular management accounts, which are reviewed against budget to monitor spending and ensure financial discipline; and ensuring our processes remain consistent with the standards expected under the PFM.
- Key performance indicators for the Office are linked to our strategic plan and statutory functions, allowing us to understand how application of our resources translate into outputs and outcomes.
- Internal oversight arrangements ensure compliance with financial policies and procurement rules.
- A risk register is maintained and reviewed regularly, which includes financial and operational risks, with appropriate mitigating actions in place.
- Our Audit and Risk Advisory Panel provides independent advice and scrutiny of our financial, risk, and governance arrangements. It serves as a further assurance mechanism, offering expert input and external perspective on the adequacy of our systems of control.

Through these governance, monitoring, and reporting arrangements, the Office of the Children's Commissioner demonstrates its commitment to applying the principles of the Public Finances Manual. By adhering to Government of Jersey procurement guidelines and maintaining rigorous financial oversight, we ensure that public resources are used responsibly, transparently, and sustainably, and that they are directed towards the fulfilment of our statutory functions.

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13. How is your organisation aligned to Island outcomes indicators and how do you measure your contribution to these outcomes?

The OCCJ recognises that a stated principle of the Government of Jersey's Public Finances Manual is that *"all Arm's Length Body activity should contribute towards public policy objectives of the States of Jersey and Island Outcomes indicators."*

As a result, we are pleased to be able to map the various Island Outcomes indicators (IOI) on to the functions, duties and principles set out in the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Jersey) Law 2019. A summary of the concordance between the Law and the IOIs is set out below; however, if further detail is required on all or any of these points, this can be provided on request.

The Island Outcome **Learn and grow** is about Islanders being encouraged to learn at all stages of their life. This directly coincides with the Commissioner's functions under Articles 4–7 of the Law. For example, if Island Outcome indicators show attainment gaps for care-experienced children, the Commissioner can review the adequacy of education services (Article 5(1)(b)), advise Ministers on proposed education law changes (Article 25), and publish findings and recommendations in the Annual Report (Articles 21–24). Further, the OCCJ provides awareness-raising and education sessions to children and adults on children's and young people's rights.

The outcome **Health and wellbeing** seeks to ensure Islanders enjoy long, healthy and active lives. Under the Law, the Commissioner can review the adequacy of children's health services, investigate systemic issues in services such as CAMHS, and assist in legal proceedings where an issue is of wider significance for children (Articles 18–20). If Island Outcome indicators show deterioration in children's mental or physical wellbeing, the Commissioner can: review specific policies that may not be in the best interests of children (Article 7) and/or review the adequacy of specific Child Rights Impact Assessments; open a formal investigation (Articles 10–17); and publish recommendations to Government.

The outcome **Safety and security** is about Islanders feeling safe and protected. The Commissioner's investigative powers (Articles 10–17) are directly relevant here. If data, casework or formal investigations reveal issues within the youth justice system or children's services, for example, the Commissioner may examine practices across services, publish a formal report with recommendations to the States Assembly (Articles 16, 21–24), and, where appropriate, assist in legal proceedings to clarify protections for children (Article 19).

The outcome **Vibrant and inclusive community** focuses on belonging and participation. The Law requires the Commissioner to involve children (Article 6) and maintain a Youth Advisory Panel (Article 28). If the work of the OCCJ and/or quantitative/qualitative research from other bodies were to show that children feel less included, for instance, then the Commissioner could request that the Panel co-design recommendations that ensure Government Ministers take the voices of children into account when developing policy and law (Article 25, which requires Minsters to consult with the Children's Commissioner, and by inference, the OCCJ's advisory panels). The Commissioner is also bound (Article 24(5)) to publish child-friendly versions of reports, which helps to ensure the continuing involvement of children in the services, policies and legislation that shape Jersey's community.

The outcome **Affordable living** aims to ensure Islanders can afford a decent standard of living. The Commissioner's duty to review adequacy of law, policy and services (Article 5(1)(a)–(b)) is central here. Where indicators show more children in households under financial strain, the Commissioner can test Government policies against UNCRC rights to an adequate standard of living (Articles 26–27 of the Convention, applied through Article 7 of the Law). The Commissioner can then advise Ministers (Article 5(1)(f)), publish recommendations (Article 21), and track progress through Annual Reports (Article 23).

The outcome **Business environment** is about Jersey being attractive for business. While not child-focused at first glance, it connects to the Commissioner's advisory powers (Article 5(1)(f)–(g)). Where business policy has indirect effects on children (such as family-friendly employment practices or protections for young workers), the Commissioner can intervene to ensure children's best interests are given primary consideration (Article 7).

The outcome **Jobs and productivity growth** is about a strong economy and rewarding opportunities. The Commissioner's role here includes reviewing how services prepare young people for work (Article 5(1)(b)) and raising awareness (Article 5(1)(c)–(d)). If indicators show rising numbers of young people not in education, employment or training, the Commissioner can recommend targeted support for vulnerable groups such as care leavers or young carers, and track whether the Government's responses close those gaps.

The outcome **Built environment** focuses on the value and use of the built and historic environment. Under Article 7, the Commissioner must ensure children's voices are heard and their best interests considered in planning decisions. If indicators highlight gaps in access to safe play or active travel, the Commissioner can advise Ministers (Article 25), consult children directly (Article 6), and publish findings on whether the built environment supports children's rights to play and development.

The outcome **Natural environment** seeks to protect nature for future generations. The Commissioner's duty to apply the UNCRC (Article 7) and report publicly (Articles 22–24) ensures children's rights to health (Article 24 of the UNCRC) and to leisure and play (Article 31) are considered. Where indicators show deterioration in air quality or access to green spaces, the Commissioner can bring this to Ministers' attention (Article 5(1)(g)) and ensure children participate in environmental decision-making.

The outcome **Sustainable resources** is about managing resources responsibly. The Commissioner's functions of monitoring compliance with the UNCRC (Article 5(1)(j)) and advising Ministers (Article 5(1)(f)) are particularly relevant. If indicators suggest unsustainable resource use with child health impacts, the Commissioner can review Child Rights Impact Assessments, recommend adjustments, and use Annual Reports to track whether improvements are achieved.

14. Please answer if applicable (if your organisation has a Board): What are the last three strategic decisions that were taken by your board and what evidence and data was used to inform these decisions?

Not Applicable

f. How does the Board set its agenda and what is required of them in terms of finalising their agenda with government?

Not Applicable

g. Do you have a board assurance framework and, if so, how often do you update this?

Not Applicable

15. How do you review your operating model to ensure value for money of your delivery?

The majority of the OCCJ's budget is allocated to staffing, rent and services, which leaves a relatively small amount available each year for operations. As a result, the OCCJ is, by both necessity and principal, keenly focused on value for money (VfM).

Some of the specific ways in which we review and monitor VfM within our organisation are listed below.

- Strong governance and assurance:

In its function as the main governance mechanism for the OCCJ, the ARAP (as mentioned in our answer to Question 11) ensures that the appropriate levels of oversight and adherence to the tenets of the Public Finances Manual are maintained. Similarly, the Panel's ongoing monitoring of the OCCJ risk register means that emerging and novel risks to financial stability/continuity are identified and mitigated in good time.

- Clear procurement rules and use of Commercial Services' central frameworks:

The OCCJ follows the best practice and requirements for procurement of services that are set out by the States' Commercial Services function. This includes requests for quotes, invitations to tender, etc.

- Eliminating everything but essential travel and expenses:

As one of Jersey's outward-facing statutory bodies and a national human rights organisation, the OCCJ is an integral part of several international groups and bodies. These include the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children, the European Network of Young Advisers, and the British and Irish Network of Ombudsman and Children's Commissioners. Each of these groups hosts multiple events, meetings and conferences each year, all of which are relevant to the work programme of the OCCJ. However, the OCCJ keeps its in-person attendance to an acceptable minimum, while increasing online participation across all work programmes.

The same principle is applied to the meetings of our Adult Advisory Panel, which has a statutory minimum of four meetings a year. Five of the Panel's eight members are based in different parts of the UK, and while it would be preferable to meet in person, the OCCJ has taken the decision that, in the interests of VfM, the Panel's meetings should ordinarily take place online.

- Process improvements:

  In its commitment to continuous review of VfM, the OCCJ monitors and improves internal processes on a regular basis. In 2024, the following internal process enhancements were implemented:

  - New monthly activity reports: The OOCJ introduced a system of monthly reporting on key activities and projects for all staff. While the Office had traditionally maintained a register of engagements (meetings, seminars, conferences attended, and so on), it did not readily capture the richness of the day-to-day work that the office undertakes. To

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provide a fuller record of the work of the office, Monthly Activity Reports were introduced in April 2024.

- Strengthened procurement policies: The OOCJ introduced more robust procurement checks and protocols, in line with States of Jersey best practice, to enhance financial transparency. In addition, the Government of Jersey's Procurement Best Practice and Procedures User Guide and Toolkit has been employed, with further advice, when necessary, from Commercial Services on tendering processes. While applied previously, the processes for procurement were reinforced in 2024.
- Improved staff performance review and appraisal system: While the OCCJ had previously used an internal performance management template, this practice had lessened in recent years. A new Performance Management and Development Form was introduced in 2024, focussing on: key areas of work; tasks associated with these; progress or the reasons for lack of this; staff understanding of their role and views on the OCCJ's performance; and staff training and development.
- From 2025, performance management will be conducted through the Connect people platform, thereby aligning with Government of Jersey practice and ensuring that appropriate records are available to our HR partner.

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