

24<sup>th</sup> January 2024

By email only

Dear Deputy Gorst, Deputy Farnham, and Deputy Mezec,

The vision of Jersey Cares is ‘love, belonging and opportunity’ for people with experience of our ‘care system’. These are people who, as children, were removed from the care of their family into the care of the Government. This is an unusual and solemn step, which places the responsibility of ‘parent’ on a Government. This exceptional situation requires particular attention from Government to ensure that those children experience love and care rather than the ‘hard edges’ of the various bureaucracies which now govern many aspects of their lives.

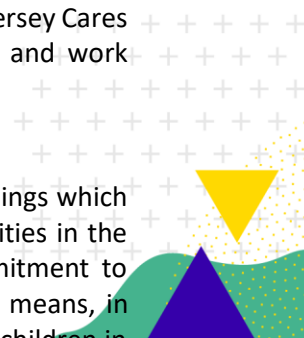
Jersey Cares was formed in 2018 following the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry (2017) by a diverse range of people and organisations with a collective profound concern for children in care. Following extensive local dialogue with those with professional and lived experience of the ‘care system’, and detailed research into what works, we developed our model. Our work encompasses advocacy, influencing and opportunities.

The previous two Government’s have laid some foundations which you can build upon. Under John Le Fondre’s Government and during Deputy Mezec’s tenure as Children’s Minister policy set the tone for ‘safe, stable, loving homes’ and for children to thrive. Under Deputy Moore’s Government and Deputy Gardiner’s political leadership Ministers began to understand their collective responsibility and the need for collective action to support the children you have taken into your care.

Now, for whomever is Chief Minister, you must move at pace to action. A child who was 6 when the Care Inquiry was published is now 13. There has been some progress from a starting point described by the Care Inquiry as ‘neglectful and indifferent’ but there is still much to do. These are our proposals for your priorities:

Jersey has made progress in recognising and responding to the needs of care experienced people, and there is also still so much more to do. These are Jersey Cares’ proposals:

1. **Develop a vision:** King Solomon said ‘without vision, people perish’. You must lead from the front, with tenacity and determination. That clunky phrase, *Corporate Parenting*, asks a simple question of ‘would this be good enough for my own child?’. We petition each of you to build on what has been done already, to work with your Council of Ministers, Jersey Cares and others to establish what is ‘good enough’ for the children in your care and work tenaciously to that end.
2. **Work together:** For a child in care, Government bureaucracy enables, or not, things which normally Mum, Dad or a guardian supports a child with. All the advocacy priorities in the image below are aspects of life which family typically help with. Your commitment to *Corporate Parenting* in the new *Children and Young People (Jersey) Law 2022* means, in essence, a determination to work together to make good things happen for the children in





your care. **Give your Council of Ministers permission to work across portfolios so children have loving homes, a good education and good relationships with people who love them.**



- 3. Have a strong cross-portfolio plan:** It is possible to be rather stuck on 'what does it mean to love children as a Government'? To be clear, your role is to enable all parts of Government to work for children's benefit. It is to enable the *best possible bureaucracy* so that those who are caring for children can do this well, so children can take love, safety and stability for granted and thrive. Develop a cross-portfolio, collaborative plan, building on what has been done and what is known and ensuring accountability.
- 4. Listen, learn and stay focused:** Your Council of Ministers will be offered training around their responsibilities to children in care and ways to hear directly from those with experience of care. Ask your Ministers to prioritise this, recognising that the care of children when they are not under the protection of family members is the most sacred duty of all.

Previous Ministers have asked 'but how do we know if things are getting better'? Ensure your Ministers receive data which measures what you have agreed, ensure you and your Ministers ask questions of that data with the care you would give to your own child's situation and listen carefully to collective representations from those with lived experience of care and those who care for them. As an island community, we can readily know and understand whether or not lives have improved.



The Common Strategic Policy 2023-26 describes Jersey as 'a place which cares for its community'. The Care Inquiry highlighted the 'enormous resources of generosity and goodwill'. The Care Inquiry painfully details the 'indifferent neglect' when this goodwill fails to be matched by political focus and intent. By working together with a steadfast focus as a Council of Ministers, you can build on the resources of goodwill, understanding and addressing the bureaucratic barriers which exist so that the children who are in your care do indeed experience love, belonging and opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

Carly Glover, CEO, Jersey Cares

