



Jersey Care
Commission

Summary Report

INSPECTION REPORT

Children's Social Care, Independent
Reviewing Officer Service (IRO),
Fostering and Adoption Services

20 – 25 May 2024

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

The following is a summary of what we found during this inspection. Further information about our findings is contained in the main body of this report.

Children's Social Care Services to children in Jersey have continued to improve since the inspections in 2019 and 2023. Concerted efforts by senior leaders have resulted in a more stable, skilled, and experienced workforce that is increasingly committed to providing good-quality help and support to children and families in Jersey.

The way to access the service (the 'front door') is efficient and well-established. Contacts related to information or concerns brought to the front door from professionals or the public are triaged quickly and passed to the appropriate service. Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) partners work effectively, and the interface with the Children and Families Hub (CFH) works well. Thresholds for interventions are well understood and applied appropriately in all areas. The co-location of agencies and disciplines, including the CFH, supports good communication with open dialogue between managers.

An accessible and thoughtfully considered Family Group Conference (FGC) service identifies and supports extended family members in efforts to keep children at home when appropriate. The Family Intervention Service (FIS) provides creative, evidence-based support, including facilitating high-quality family contact, life story work, and direct work with children, parents, and carers. This is beginning to improve the consistency of children's plans, outcomes, and experiences. Children with complex needs are well supported.

The shortfall in the IRO Service identified in December 2023 has been addressed at pace, and children now benefit from ever improving and effective oversight of their plans. This, in turn, is leading to greater stability and security for children in the care of the Minister, who are better supported and helped to achieve their full potential. Support for children off the Island remains consistently good.

Several changes in key strategic posts, influential in the development and oversight of Children's Social Care Services and across the partnership, are now in place. This brings a refreshed rigour and energy, while maintaining what has been working well.

A new Director for Children's Social Care Services has been appointed, and since their arrival, the development of a robust infrastructure for the planned implementation of the revised Reform Programme has gathered momentum. There is a renewed focus on ensuring that quality assurance and learning and development activities are joined up to drive improvements in practice. Inspectors found the self-evaluation, refreshed for this inspection, to be an honest, transparent, and accurate reflection of the quality of practice.

On taking up their appointment in April 2024, the Director urgently reviewed the response to vulnerable children who regularly go missing or are at risk of exploitation, which were identified as weaknesses in the inspection in 2023. New proposals have been put forward to immediately implement a new way of working, which are supported by police partners. The resulting agreement will establish a more joined-up response to missing and exploitation, and the partnership has committed to progressing the agreed plan at pace. Work is underway to map the pathway and process, to collaboratively support vulnerable teenage children at risk in care and in the community, however this is in its infancy. **Area for improvement 1.**

There is evidence of a more significant commitment to develop the Government of Jersey's Corporate Parenting responsibilities. In particular, the Government must establish a Children in Care and Care Leavers Council to enable children to meaningfully shape and influence the changes needed to services. These plans now need to be progressed quickly. A key priority for corporate parents going forward is to enact the entitlement for children in care and care leavers by identifying and addressing legal barriers, so that the full benefits can be delivered as intended. **Area for improvement 2.**

The department still struggles to resolve some of the longstanding cultural challenges that have impacted Children's Social Care for years. There remains a need to increase structural and organisational support to the directorate of the Children's Social Care Service, particularly support in managing internal and external communications, Human Resources, workforce management, and financial skills and capacity.

This support is essential to the successful implementation of key priorities in the Children's Reform and Improvement Programme, for which a structure for overseeing and monitoring delivery is now in place.

A core aspect of the programme is to improve the sufficiency of fostering households on the Island for a wide range of children and young people, including reviewing current provision, a focus on increasing numbers of foster carers, and the ability to offer children a choice of fostering families to meet their needs. Since January 2024, significant improvements have been made in the Fostering Service following a review in quarter four of 2023. Crucial progress was evidenced in ensuring the service's safety, reducing assessment timescales, enhancing quality, and restructuring the team to improve outcomes. Alongside this, there has been an extensive recruitment programme to secure a wider choice and availability of fostering households, focusing on increasing the number of families who can support teenagers, mothers and babies, and siblings.

The fostering and adoption panels currently lack sufficient operational procedures and essential governance, which compromises the panel service's safety and efficiency. Recognised and identified as an area for development in the Fostering and Adoption improvement plan, accelerated progress is needed to ensure clear procedural and regulatory compliance to respond safely and effectively in recruiting and retaining foster carers and prospective adopters for Jersey's children. **Area for improvement 3.**

IMPROVEMENT PLAN

There were three areas for improvement identified during this inspection. The table below is the Registered Provider's response to the inspection findings.

Areas for Improvement – Children’s Social Care Service

<p>Area for Improvement 1</p> <p>Ref: Standard 7 and 8</p> <p>To be completed by: 25 February 2025 (nine months from the date of the inspection)</p>	<p>The Registered Provider must progress at pace, strategic and operational multi-agency plans to improve the collaborative approach to vulnerable teenage children, including those who go missing from home or care.</p> <p>This should include robust multi-agency identification of risks and a whole system response to meeting their needs and reducing the likelihood of harm.</p> <hr/> <p>Response of Registered Provider:</p> <p>Action will be taken to create a multi-agency strategic action plan to improve the response to missing and exploitation in Jersey, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing daily multi agency missing meetings to ensure greater join up and intelligence gathering to respond to risks. • Mapping of new pathways to ensure effective referral and response. • Enhanced data collection and dashboard to ensure senior leaders have accurate oversight. • Increased focus and purpose of activity within residential setting when children are missing from care. • Increased out of hours activity to support children to return to family care.
---	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular strategic multi agency meetings to consider the activity, disruption, information sharing and prevention each agency can deliver.
--	---

<p>Area for Improvement 2</p> <p>Ref: Standard 2</p> <p>To be completed by: 25 November 2024 (six months from the date of the inspection)</p>	<p>A priority as Corporate Parents is to enact the new entitlement for children in care and care leavers by identifying and addressing legal barriers that prevent them from fully benefitting from this offer.</p> <p>The Registered Provider must expedite the implementation of a children in care and care leavers council to enable children to meaningfully shape and influence changes needed.</p>
	<p>Response of Registered Provider:</p> <p>Work will need to take place cross government to respond to this recommendation as the issues sit within other directorates, particularly the issue about housing entitlements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A housing workstream will be set up to consider how to progress this recommendation and will be chaired by the Director of Children’s services. Work will also take place with housing providers to consider how to strengthen the housing offer for care leavers and smooth the pathway. <p>Work will commence to strengthen the relationship, reporting and accountability with the current advocacy provider in delivering the CICC which has been contracted for delivery by them.</p>

Areas for Improvement – Fostering and Adoption

<p>Area for Improvement 3</p> <p>Ref: Standard 14 (Fostering Standards) and 16 (Adoption Standards)</p> <p>To be completed by: 25 November 2025 (six months from the date of the inspection)</p>	<p>To establish and put in place appropriate governance and operational procedures in relation to the Fostering and Adoption panels which respond safely and effectively in recruiting and retaining foster carers and prospective adopters for Jersey's children.</p> <hr/> <p>Response of Registered Provider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New IT equipment will be purchased for panel members to ensure the safe access and storage of panel papers.• Review will take place of recruitment and remuneration of fostering panel members including update of current panel members ensuring safer recruitment and checks are adhered to.• Training and development of panel members to take place, commencing with first panel development day, followed by scheduled training throughout the year.• Appraisal system for panel members to be designed to identify development needs annually. <p>Terms of reference to be reviewed and updated for the fostering and adoption panels, underway alongside whole service review of procedures.</p>
---	--

The full report can be accessed from [here](#).