



## **Children's Commissioner for Jersey** Promoting and Protecting Children's Rights

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### **News Release**

**25 October**

Last week representatives from Jersey travelled to Norway and Sweden on a trip organised by the Children's Commissioner to learn about embedding children's rights across policy and practice from world leaders in this area.

One of the main aims of the trip was to learn how Norway and Sweden, regarded as two of the most progressive nations in terms of the promotion and protection of children's rights, had progressed implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It was also an opportunity to establish links with counterparts in other jurisdictions and raise the profile of the work Jersey is doing to implement the UNCRC.

During the four-day trip, Jersey delegates, including the Children's Commissioner and the Minister for Children, Senator Mezec, met with a number of high ranking professionals including:

- Both the Swedish and Norwegian Ombudsmen for Children
- Representatives from UNICEF
- Members of the UN Committee on the Rights of The Child
- Representatives from Swedish Government

Discussions focused on the approach taken by both government and non-government organisations to ensure that at every level of society there was an understanding of children's rights. The recommendation was that a 'package of measures' was introduced to build knowledge across all sectors, from social workers to the judiciary. However, despite being recognised as world leaders in this area, neither Norway or Sweden are complacent.

In both countries, work is ongoing to continue to look for ways to build on what had already been achieved and continue to strengthen children's rights.

Jersey's first independent Children's Commissioner's primary function is to promote and protect children's rights, this includes a responsibility to monitor governments commitment to implementation of the UNCRC.

In signing the UNCRC treaty in 2014 the States of Jersey committed to upholding its obligations under international law to respect, protect and promote children's rights, but little progress has been made since then. The recent decision by the council of Ministers to introduce a new law, places a statutory duty on the States of Jersey to demonstrate that they have considered the impact of any new legislation or policy on children's rights.

This new law, which is considered an important first step in paving the way for full incorporation (considered the gold standard approach by the UN committee), is expected to come into effect towards the end of 2019.

The Children's Commissioner for Jersey, Deborah McMillan, Said:

"I was pleased that Senator Mezec was able to join us as it is important that as Minister for Children he see's first-hand what we are aspiring to. It has also led to some productive discussions around how the commitments made to children in the recently publish Common Strategic Policy can be progressed in line with the UNCRC.

We must ensure that policy makers and practitioners have a comprehensive view of children's rights and that they feel empowered to take a rights-based approach rather than considering individual rights in isolation. It's a culture shift and a there's a lot of work to do to increase knowledge of the UNCRC throughout Jersey.

In terms of incorporating the UNCRC Jersey has a unique opportunity to get it right first time. We have support from colleagues in other jurisdictions and my office also has a number of experts in children's rights on our advisory panel, including a representative from UNICEF who was able to join us on the trip. We will provide support, but it is Jersey's Government who must take this forward.

Jersey must aspire to be a small nation leading in children's rights, it will involve a lot of work but it's achievable."

**-ends-**

## **Notes to Editors**

1. For more information please contact Kate Cadigan, Communications for the Office of the Children's Commissioner on 867314 or email [kate@childcomjersey.org.ie](mailto:kate@childcomjersey.org.ie)

## **UNCRC**

The UNCRC is an internationally recognised system of child's rights which has been incorporated by a growing number of progressive States to form the foundation of domestic children's law and practice.

### **Children's Rights in Norway**

In Norway the UNCRC has been incorporated in its entirety into national law. This was a decision of the parliament taken in 2003, four years after the enactment of the Human Rights Act of 1999 which incorporated the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) into Norwegian law. It came following a recommendation of the CRC Committee.

### **Children's Rights in Sweden**

Sweden is a nation which has taken on a prominent role as a human rights advocate in general, and is considered to be particularly progressive in the field of children's rights. It was the first country in the world, in 1979, to decide to prohibit all corporal punishment of children.

In 1989 Sweden took an active role in the drafting and negotiation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and became one of the first states to ratify the Convention in 1990, doing so without any reservations. And has since signed two of the later Optional Protocols to the UNCRC.

In 1990 the Swedish Parliament ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (the CRC). Sweden was thereby committed under international law to implement the Convention.

## **The role of the Children's Commissioner**

The role of the Children's Commissioner is explicitly focused on the promotion and protection of children's rights and will be underpinned by the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The Commissioner will be encouraging and supporting all schools in Jersey to become Rights Respecting Schools.

The Children's Commissioner for Jersey will:

- support children and young people to find out about children's rights
- listen to children and young people to find out what's important to them
- advise children, young people and those who care for them if they feel they've got nowhere else to go with their problems
- influence government and other organisations who have a responsibility for making a difference to children's lives, making sure they keep their promises to children and young people
- speak up for children and young people on important issues – the Commissioner will be the children's champion

The Children's Commissioner for Jersey will operate in shadow form initially and will assist in bringing forward legislation to the States Assembly that would confirm the functions and powers of the Commissioner in legislation.