

## **Annual Report of Independent Chair 2010-2011 Forward Plan 2011-2012**

**Introduction.** The Jersey Child Protection Committee (JCPC) is the key mechanism for agreeing how organisations in Jersey (statutory, independent and voluntary) will work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children on the Island, to ensure the effectiveness of what they do.

The States of Jersey Child Protection Committee is established by Act of Committee with a reporting accountability to the Minister for Health and Social Services. The JCPC Chair is a designated advisor to the CPG and there is a defined relationship with Ministerial Children's Policy Group (CPG); CPG responsibilities include:-

1. formal receipt of the Annual Report and Plan for the Jersey Child Protection Committee.
2. formal receipt of the Report of Serious Case Reviews (SCR's) commissioned and undertaken by the Jersey Child Protection Committee. CPG will:
  - formally consider and adopt all relevant recommendations;
  - work in partnership with JCPC to oversee and monitor delivery recommendations;
  - report SCR findings and recommendations to the Council of Ministers.

**The working relationship with Ministers** is strong and constructive, with informal engagement and advice operating alongside reporting and scheduled meetings. The CPG is a highly valued forum providing a corporate analysis and demonstrating strong political and chief officer commitment to policy formulation and service development.

**The JCPC membership** has changed in personnel terms during this year, mainly due to organisational restructuring and the voluntary redundancy programme. I have met with the relevant Chief Officers during the past 6 months to follow up on a membership discussion paper which raised the role and accountability of members as well as attempting to clarify the definitions of elements of "interprofessional practice" and "governance" in child protection services. Progress is being made but the changes resulting from the various restructurings and the corporate spending review need to be finalised before the designation of JCPC membership and allocation of Sub-Committee Chairs can be completed. I anticipate this being concluded by the autumn of this year.

**The legal status** of the JCPC has not been a limiting factor in its achievement of its aims in my two years as Chair. However, being established by an Act of Committee of the States of Jersey, and reporting to the Minister for Health and Social Services who must agree its recommendations, it has no statutory power to require agencies to work together to safeguard the children and young people of Jersey and its capacity to ensure that shortcomings are tackled is limited.

It is important to note that the Review by the Sub-panel of the Health, Social Security and Housing Scrutiny Panel into the Co-ordination of Services for Vulnerable Children, presented to the States on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2009, contained two recommendations pertinent to this issue:-

*Recommendation 27. That the Jersey Child Protection Committee is renamed the "Safeguarding of Children Committee" which would more clearly represent its role and function to the wider community.*

*Recommendation 28. That the Jersey Child Protection Committee is established in Law to ensure that it has the necessary authority to ensure its recommendations are acted upon.*

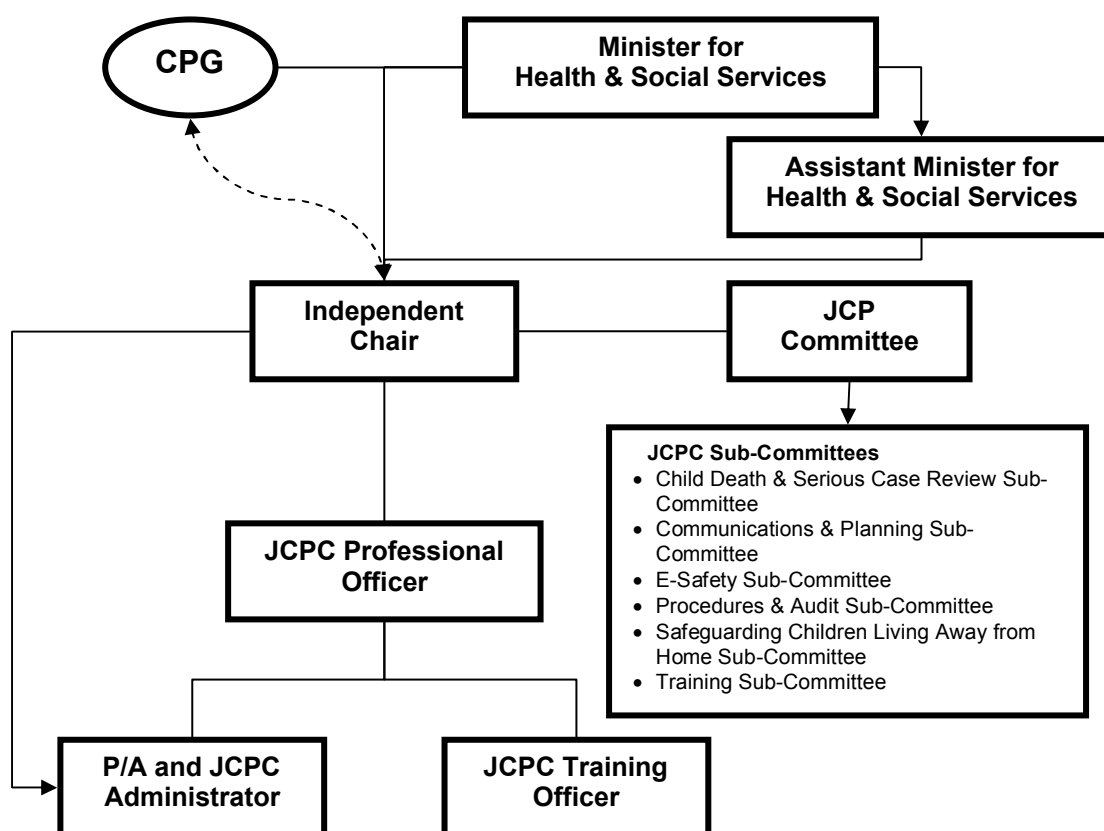
In her response to this Review on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009, the Minister undertook to discuss these Recommendations with the Independent Chair and take the views forward as appropriate. The CPG has recently received a proposal from the JCPC concerning the drafting of an amendment to the Children (Jersey) Law 2002, giving definition to the role and function of the successor body to the JCPC; the content of the amendment to reflect Chapter 3 of Working Together 2010 and any relevant recommendations arising from the recently published Munro Review of Child Protection. The CPG also agreed that the JCPC, in the light of the process above, be authorised to change its name and status to reflect its broader role and remit.

I recognise that this will not be a speedy process but it is proper to set it in train now and use the time to reflect upon the content and recommendations of the Munro Review into Child Protection in England. The CPG will oversee the content and timing of any changes and the relationship between the JCPC and the States of Jersey will be carefully expressed in order to confirm the independence of the Chair whilst ensuring a proper and constructive function within the machinery of government.

**States support services.** It had been planned to have a Service Level Agreement signed off and operational in the early part of 2011. The JCPC is satisfied with the format and content of the proposed documentation but is still awaiting confirmation from those responsible within the relevant States functions to sign this off or at the very least progress discussion around it. This process is indicative of a difficulty which the JCPC has experienced in engaging productively with support services of the States throughout my two years as Chair. A very conservative estimate indicates that I have spent well in excess of five working days in each of my contracted years (36 days) dealing with budget and personnel processes where the system has not been geared to deliver the outcomes required of the service and where there is a lack of constructive core policy and procedural documentation to support us. The JCPC staff investment of time and effort in these unproductive endeavours far exceeds mine and must be assessed as an opportunity cost – time spent away from the core tasks – to our service. This is not a criticism of proper governance, which I respect; it is a reflection on excessive investment in ineffectual corporate systems and processes which are inappropriate and do not add value to our work. Our budget – just in excess of £200,000 - is small and our staffing quota - 3 full-time + contract for Chair – is defined. Consequently, I have to record my concern about the amount of time invested in the processes to support our endeavour – to achieve this we have initiated our own systems and reporting for budget control for example – and my anxiety that our experience is replicated across much larger and more complex services in Jersey at a much greater service cost.

**Budget 2010.** By our budget monitoring and close control of expenditure, the JCPC reported an underspend in 2010 against its budget of just under £200,000. Over 75% of the budget is salaries for the three full-time posts in our team. There had been virement during the course of the year to cover non-recurrent costs such as contribution to the JCPC Conference, printing the Multi-Agency Procedures and funding the Referrals Audit. The regradings for the post of Professional Officer and Administrative Officer were finally resolved in 2011 – a process which had started in May 2010, following a commitment on appointment to review after 1 year. The budget for 2011 includes these revised salaries and also has a 'draw down' element of £10,000 for rental – ensuring the JCPC has accommodation independence if required – and a base £7,000 for the commissioning of any Serious Case Review considered necessary.

### JCPC Structure



### *Organisational Structure*

**Core functions.** The Sub-Committees of the JCPC remain established as in the previous year, though Children Living Away from Home has not operated as a result of personnel changes. Work programmes have in the main been delivered and it is proper that I acknowledge the investment of time and effort of all engaged with the Sub-Committees, especially the Chairs. I recognise that this work is generally undertaken in addition to the demands of core role and function and I am impressed by the capacity to initiate and complete tasks and support the work of the JCPC. My team is dependent upon this good will and commitment and never takes it for granted.

Some major pieces of work have been concluded – the publication of the Multi-Agency Procedures; delivery of a Referral Audit; Training and Communications Strategy documents; E-safety training in Jersey recently adopted in Guernsey; confirmation of Thresholds for Referral and Access to Services and the commissioning of work on a Jersey Common Assessment Framework for early identification of need and consistent communication in respect of children at risk. These are just some examples of the achievements which stand alongside the delivery of our multi-agency training programme – a testament to high productivity from a low base budget – and the response to expressions of concern about children and the services which are provided for them and their families/carers.

**The Serious Case Review** (SCR) published in March 2010, contained action plans in response to the findings and recommendations of the Overview Report Writer. These have been monitored throughout the year with reports to CPG. It has now been concluded that the work required to deliver the action plans is completed or ongoing and part of work programmes. Learning from the experience of this Serious Case Review, the JCPC has defined new procedures for any future commissions. These will be reviewed in the light of the findings and recommendations of the Munro Review in this context but I do not anticipate major changes to the processes in Jersey.

There have been 2 further cases considered for Serious Case Review during this year. These raised issues just as concerning as those identified in respect of BA and his Family in the SCR but in each case, we took the view that there would not be new lessons to be learned from in-depth analysis and report at this stage. However, these deliberations made clear that the deficiencies in child protection services as experienced by BA and his family were not isolated to this one case and the real test will be in the improvement to current practice, as identified through the SCR Action Plans and the level of requests for Serious Case Reviews in the future. There are certainly no grounds for complacency with the finalising of the work on the published SCR. Everyone with an involvement in child protection needs to be confident that any expression of concern about meeting the criteria will be rigorously investigated.

**JCPC Conference and Training.** The SCR experience informed the JCPC Conference held in September 2010 and themed around neglect. Two nationally recognised experts presented keynote speeches supported by a dozen workshops available to participants. The Conference was over-subscribed – 186 attendees – and feedback reflected the enthusiasm both for the content and the opportunity to meet and share experiences and ideas; in all, a truly multi-agency experience which challenged and developed policy and practice. We have decided to hold a major conference on a bi-annual basis and host a smaller, professionally focussed event in the alternate years. This year we are running a seminar on Protecting Babies from Harm with four presentations from Jersey based specialists in this area. Again, high demand for this event is encouraging.

One of the key roles of the JCPC is to ensure an accessible training programme in child protection, meeting the needs of all member agencies and responding to different professional capacities and roles. I remain highly impressed with the quality of the programme we promote and am grateful for the industry of our Training Sub-Committee and the delivery of our Training Officer with support from JCPC colleagues; the majority of this programme is delivered free of charge. We have increased the training budget for this year from £5,000 to £6,500 – still a small base budget for the delivery in volume and quality. I am keen for more active engagement

with our planning for the training programme and on our courses from all agencies and am working with Chief Officers to achieve this.

**Performance and Monitoring.** A key theme in child protection work is consistency – of communication, of decision making and performance. All the published serious case reviews – our own included – highlight this as a requirement in the response to expressions of concern, the assessment of referrals with consequent action and the management and supervision of professionals working with vulnerable children. More than one route must be followed to achieve such consistency; it requires attention on a range of fronts including training, procedures with supporting guidance and monitoring through governance and inspection. Our work programme this year has reflected all these elements, most significantly in the publication of revised Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedures which include agreed Thresholds for Referral and Access to Services and have resulted in a joint commission of work to produce a Common Assessment Framework for Jersey. All these new initiatives will take time to develop and apply with confidence in the various services, but they are a major and constructive step towards reliable communication, clear expectation of response and consistency of outcome. They are the result of a great deal of work and reflect a shift to a stronger multi-agency commitment to engage collaboratively in child protection work. This is to be welcomed and must be reinforced through political and management endorsement whenever possible.

This report and the work of the JCPC and its Sub-Committees are not informed by activity measures and performance statistics. There is a distinct lack of multi-agency data in respect of child protection referral, assessment and outcomes. As a consequence, it is difficult to devise any commentary on the level of work being undertaken and provide a view as to trends and resources. This theme will be developed during this coming year by the JCPC and our target is to contribute to the development of more corporate recording and monitoring systems which can be interrogated on a consistent basis and used for performance reporting and service planning.

**Promoting the JCPC.** Part of our remit is to promote the JCPC and its work in Jersey raising the profile of the need to protect children from harm and ensuring that this is seen as a responsibility of all not just of the 'child protection services'. We have undertaken a range of initiatives to meet this requirement, in line with our recently developed Communications Strategy. There is a strong and generally constructive relationship with media and the JCPC view and contribution is sought on a range of relevant issues along with our pro-active promotion of materials and initiatives. Once again, the E-Safety Sub-Committee has produced and delivered training materials to retailers of IT equipment to children and families and this model has been promoted with the ICPC in Guernsey. We have published a newsletter for those with any child protection responsibilities and will continue to use high profile events to give expression to our aspirations for change and improvement of services for children and families. Our 'in-house' conference in December 2010 received a presentation from David Brindle, Social Affairs Editor at The Guardian on the representation of child protection in the media and the means to counteract some of the bad press.

**Independent Scrutiny.** The JCPC strongly endorsed the recommendation in the Williamson Report to commission a regular inspection of children's social care services in Jersey and has engaged with Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS, formerly SWIA) in its inspection into the services for Looked After Children. We have submitted written reports and materials and the Chair was interviewed by the Inspectors. This process, which will culminate in the inspection report to CPG this autumn, demonstrates a willingness on the part of Children's Services to experience a critical evaluation of its services and a professional commitment to handle the results of it.

This has implications broader than the service and its management, as the commentary will consider the quality of service received by Looked After Children in all settings – school, youth justice and health for example – and the role which the States of Jersey plays in the lives of those for whom it has parenting responsibility. Many of these children and young people will have been abused and there is a continuing responsibility to ensure their safety in the care system.

The case has been made in the Williamson material and elsewhere for strong investment in 'independent' scrutiny and monitoring of services to the most vulnerable children and young people. We have continued to support and represent the need for independent monitoring to be recognised and developed, both through the protection of the status of the independent chair of the JCPC and the role of the officers of the service and also through our ongoing relationship with the Independent Board of Visitors.

There are other Williamson recommendations which have not progressed and, without wishing to pre-empt the findings of the SCSWIS Report, we consider these to be essential to the well-being and safety of children in the looked-after system as well as adding to the quality of the child protection services. The first is the recommendation for the development of an Independent Reviewing Officer Service with an emphasis on the capacity to chair multi-agency meetings in the looked after and child protection contexts and, more importantly, the power to challenge plans and delivery for the benefit of the child or young person concerned; to deliver this properly will require careful positioning of the service and support to its critical competence. The second is an Independent Advocacy Service for Looked After Children. There is a pressing case for this anyway, but the potential for the introduction of such a service to be seen as a positive initiative in response to past abuses and poor practice, means that its delivery should not be delayed any further. This service would provide a mechanism to ensure that the experiences of anyone in the care system could now be heard and represented. Seeing independent commentary as a strength to validate the work being done, as well as a protection for the most vulnerable, is a challenge to professional boundaries and the defensiveness which must be tackled if quality and safety are to be assured.

**In conclusion**, I wish to acknowledge the contribution of the JCPC Committee and Sub-Committee members to our work. It is sometimes hard to champion a multi-agency agenda and perspective when the demands of your own service and function are pressing, particularly with the current demands of the SCR process, and I respect the commitment given by many. There are other functions which are not in membership and whose help is essential and much valued – the Law Officers Department and the Data Protection Commissioner stand out in this context. Finally, the JCPC team – Professional Officer, Training Officer and Administrative Officer – which is essential to our profile and performance. I have stated frequently that the strength of my ‘independence’ is reflective of the dependence which I have on the performance of my team. Each fulfils their own function with professionalism and commitment and all work together when required to deliver our services and functions to the benefit of children and young people in Jersey. I value this greatly and never take it for granted.

MJT/06/2011