

Witness Name : Philip John Dennett  
Statement No : First  
Exhibits: PD1 – PD29  
Dated :

**THE INDEPENDENT JERSEY CARE INQUIRY**

---

EXHIBIT PD25

---

secondary schools, with close links to primary schools, will assist in this process. Discussions are ongoing at the present time with senior managers of the relevant agencies to develop a preventative service which will play a significant part in the development of the fostering service and enable children to remain at home with their family and receive the necessary support.

### **10.3 Jersey Child Protection Service**

- 10.3.1 The Jersey Child Protection Service has recently been subjected to much criticism as expressed in the public media by a former Minister for Health and Social Services. Part of the series of events resulting in my appointment to this inquiry was to do with the Chairmanship and leadership of the Jersey Child Protection Committee (JCPC). The former Minister for Health and Social Services, as one of his last acts as Minister before leaving the post, dismissed the former Chair of the JCPC – a voluntary, unpaid post, because of the alleged conspiracy in relation to the non disclosure of serious allegations of abuse by a formerly employed member of staff in a children's home. There were further allegations of mismanagement of a serious untoward incident leading to a review of practice by all the agencies involved.
- 10.3.2 Professor June Thoburn, from the University of East Anglia was asked to assume the role of chairman of the JCPC for one year and Professor Thoburn has undertaken this role since 1st January 2008.
- 10.3.3 She immediately launched a thorough review of the work of the JCPC and all the reporting and monitoring mechanisms and I have worked closely with her to ensure she is kept fully informed of the progress of my inquiry. Professor Thoburn has similarly kept me fully informed of her developing role and the changes she is introducing into the role and processes of the Child Protection Committee.
- 10.3.4 Essential to this review is the need for distinction to be made between the strategic and monitoring role of the JCPC with respect to multi agency aspects of child protection and, the day to day work of the Children's Service staff in supporting families and protecting children from maltreatment. These developments should make it more likely that any inadequacies in the child protection services will come to light and be appropriately addressed in timely fashion.

10.3.5 Given Professor Thoburn's extensive knowledge of Children's services and her significant standing in the Child Protection Service in the United Kingdom, I am very confident in stating that the service will be safe, effective and monitored to the highest standards.

#### **10.4 Children's Executive**

10.4.1 This group was established in 2003 as one of the recommendations of the Bull Report. Membership of the Executive comprises senior representatives from the following Departments:

Education, Sport and Culture	Principal Youth Officer Principal Educational Psychologist Manager of The Bridge
Health	Consultant Child Psychiatrist Consultant Paediatrician
Children's Services	Directorate Manager Social Services Service Manager-Children's Service
Social Services	Co-ordinator, Children's Executive
Police	Police Inspector
Probation	Assistant Chief Probation Officer
Prison	Prison Governor

10.4.2 The Executive is accountable to the Ministers of the Home Affairs (HA), Health and Social Services (HSS) and Education, Sport and Culture (ESC) departments. It meets on a monthly basis and is currently chaired by Co-ordinator of the Children's Executive.

10.4.3 I have met with officers who attend the Executive meetings, read the minutes of previous meetings and attended one of their meetings to observe at first hand the work of this group.

- 10.4.4 I have noted that there is a degree of confusion about its purpose and effectiveness given the generally agreed lack of clarity about its overall accountability.
- 10.4.5 The original proposal, as outlined in the Bull Report was to develop the concept of "corporate parental responsibility". That in my opinion is a laudable objective. But in my judgement this does not seem to have been achieved. The Children's Executive appears to operate within the Children's Service of the Health and Social Services Department and has created an additional tier of management without a clear line of accountability or delegation to ensure a corporate approach to the care of looked after children and since it includes some families support services for children who may be in need of protection whilst living with their families.
- 10.4.6 These comments should not be interpreted as wholly critical or negative as there have been some positive developments from the Executive. For example, the club that meets at the Greenfield site for young people in the Alternative Curriculum is an innovative multi-agency approach which demonstrates a clear commitment to help these young people develop and return to school at an appropriate time.
- 10.4.7 My main concerns about the Children's Executive concern the issue of clear lines of accountability for services for children within the States Assembly. The appointment of a Minister or Commissioner for Children and Young People would go some way to improving the current arrangements and clarify the issue of accountability. I would further recommend that the Children's Executive be replaced by a Children's Services Executive Committee at Chief Officer/Deputy level to be responsible for developing and delivering a Children's Services Plan for all vulnerable children and their families.
- 10.4.8 The decision as to whether the States of Jersey should appoint a Minister or Commissioner for Children is complex and in my judgement finely balanced. The role of Minister for Children could create some confusion in relation to responsibilities of other significant ministries - Education, Sports and Culture, and Home Affairs - but the benefits of having a single, senior appointment would give a very clear statement that the States of Jersey is determined to provide a high quality service for all children on the Island with clear lines of accountability. Whether the accountability should be for all children or for all vulnerable children who may be in need of additional services should be part of this discussion.

## **10.5 External Independent Scrutiny**

- 10.5.1 One aspect of working in the public sector in a community that has a distinct geographical definition, which particularly applies to Health and Social Care, is the greater need, in my judgement, for external scrutiny of Services. Managing these services is complex and challenging and for obvious reasons securing appropriate external scrutiny in Jersey is more difficult but very necessary. A good illustration of this is the need for transparency of independence in the Reviewing post for Looked After Children. This is an essential post and the current arrangements, whilst being independent from the Children's Service and making best use of available resources, in the opinion of many who either receive the service or work in it, are not judged to be sufficiently independent. I recommend that consideration be given to employing an Agency or an individual to undertake the functions of the Independent Reviewing Officer who is not resident on the Island. There are currently 77 children and young people requiring this service and this degree of external overview would provide a level of security for the Chief Executive that services are provided at a satisfactory level and are compliant with all legal requirements.
- 10.5.2 Further thought should also be given to engaging an organisation to carry out annual or bi annual inspections of the work of the Social Services department to provide independent verification that the required standards are being achieved.

## **10.6 Future direction**

- 10.6.1 The States of Jersey Children's Services have been subjected to a number of extensive reviews and as I write this report, there is the highly publicised, on going Police Inquiry into alleged child abuse at Haut de la Garenne, a former Children's Home in the Island.
- 10.6.2 Inevitably such a long period of external review can lead to degrees of uncertainty and lack of decision making, and if this has been the case, it is now imperative that a clear, focussed strategic direction for the Children's Service on the Island is established.
- 10.6.3 There are a number of areas of good practice which provide the necessary foundation on which to build the future services. The recent development of the Fostering Service must be acknowledged not only because of the initial success of the project but also because as it continues to develop it will provide an opportunity to redesign the provision of