

THE STATES OF DELIBERATION
of the
ISLAND OF GUERNSEY

28th January, 2026

Proposition No. P.2025/143

Policy & Resources Committee

Government Work Plan 2026-2029

AMENDMENT

Proposed by: Deputy S Rochester

Seconded by: Deputy J Strachan

To insert an additional proposition as follows:

- “6. To develop a coordinated, informed and coherent youth strategy, following the completion of an island wide consultation with young people (children aged 5-18 years old) and to direct the Policy & Resources Committee:
- i) to coordinate the necessary cross-committee work for the workstream; and
 - ii) to engage the Youth Commission for Guernsey and Alderney as a partner in the workstream.”.

Rule 4(1) Information

- a) The proposition contributes to the States’ objectives and policy plans by ensuring work to improve outcomes for children is coordinated, prioritised and is based on the voice of young people.
- b) In preparation of this amendment consultation was undertaken with the Policy & Resources Committee.
- c) The proposition has been submitted to His Majesty’s Procureur for advice on any legal or constitutional implications.
- d) The workstream will likely require an extensive consultation and engagement process, this is anticipated to cost less than £100k.
- e) Drafting advice has been sought from the States’ Greffier and advice has been sought from the officers of the Policy & Resources Committee.

Explanatory Note

This amendment proposes the addition of a workstream to develop a youth strategy to the Government Work Plan, to be developed alongside the Guernsey Youth Commission. The strategy is intended to provide a coherent, cross-government framework to improve outcomes for young people and amplify their voice in public life.

It is proposed that this additional priority is included in “Foundations for Our Future” under the “A Place to Grow and Succeed” category of work.

Improving outcomes for young people is intrinsically linked to wider government priorities, including workforce sustainability, economic participation, community safety, and long-term public service demand. Early, preventative investment in young people reduces future pressure on health, social care, and criminal justice systems while supporting the long-term retention of skills, experience, and future leadership within our community.

Rationale

The Government Work Plan exists to direct resources towards the most important aspects of island life, yet no specific reference is made to supporting those who face some of the most significant challenges on our island, namely those in the 5- to 18-year-old age range, i.e. our children and young people.

The Guernsey Community Foundation’s Quality of Life Report, issued in 2025, showed that the Island’s young people are suffering.

By the time our children reach the 16 to 25 age range, only 18% of males and 0% of females surveyed rated themselves as having high mental wellbeing; and of all age groups surveyed, young islanders were most likely to report high levels of low life satisfaction.

This issue, of course, starts in earlier life: only 28% of school age pupils say they have high self-esteem – a drop of 22% between 2016 and 2022, the period covered by the last Children and Young People’s Survey. A more recent Jersey survey published in 2024 shows a similar and continuing decline.

The Foundation’s Report also shows that our 16 to 25 year olds are lonelier than any other cohort of Islanders, with 28.4% saying they are intensely emotionally lonely (lacking close personal relationships) and 43% saying they are intensely socially lonely (they lack a social network).

If we want to address these heartbreaking statistics and give our young people a better quality of life and hope for the future, then we need to act – and to act early.

The proposed youth strategy will base its recommended actions upon the above data points, along with the results of the forthcoming Children and Young People’s survey; but, critically, it will also base its proposed actions on the only voice that matters for this strategy: that of young people. When surveyed, 61.9% of the Island’s young people disagreed with the

statement, “I have a say in what government does.” 33.6% neither agreed nor disagreed. Only 4.5% agreed with the statement.

There is already much work being undertaken to support more vulnerable children through the Children and Young People’s Plan – due to be updated shortly – but that has a relatively narrow focus on safeguarding, welfare and statutory duties. The proposed youth strategy would be crafted in response to the voice of young people on the island. It would focus on empowerment, opportunity and participation.

Today’s young people face complex and interconnected challenges relating to mental health, education and skills, housing affordability, employment, inclusion, and participation in civic life. While existing policies address some aspects of these issues, there is no single, integrated strategy that brings together government, business, third-sector partners and young people themselves. This proposed strategy needs to work for and with young people to ensure that they feel valued, are able to participate meaningfully in island life, and are adequately represented in government policy.

In a time where our young people are reporting increasing feelings of isolation, deteriorating mental health and feelings of uncertainty about their future, we have a responsibility to provide support, agency and hope. A youth strategy, or similar cohesive framework, would ensure coordinated action, encourage efficient use of resources, and promote measurable progress against shared priorities, reflecting the commitment of this government to this valued section of our community and to the resulting long-term social and economic sustainability.

Objectives

The development of the youth strategy would incorporate the following objectives:

- **Voice and Influence** – Ensure young people are meaningfully involved in decision-making, with clear routes for influence at local and island-wide levels.
- **Opportunity and Aspiration** – Support access to education, skills, training, and quality employment, particularly during key transition points.
- **Wellbeing and Inclusion** – Promote positive mental and physical health, safety, and belonging for all young people.
- **Place and Community** – Enable young people to thrive in their communities through reliable access to transport, culture, and safe youth-friendly spaces, strengthening their sense of belonging and connection to the islands.
- **Support and Protection** – Ensure vulnerable young people are identified early and supported effectively, with coordinated safeguarding and targeted interventions that reduce escalation and improve outcomes.

Methodology

The recommendations of the strategy will be developed through:

- **Engagement with children and the Guernsey Youth Commission:** through an island-wide engagement process ensuring young people shape priorities, language, and solutions, using means such as an island wide youth survey, a youth citizens assembly and focus groups (supporting data gathering for other GWP workstreams).
- **Evidence-led analysis:** Use of local data, service mapping, and lived-experience insight to identify gaps and opportunities.
- **Cross-government collaboration:** Working with all relevant Committees to ensure their active involvement so as to embed youth considerations across policy areas.
- **Clear outcomes and accountability:** Any strategic objectives should have defined actions, measurable indicators, and lead Committees, with associated progress reporting.

Interdependencies

The development of the youth strategy will need to consider associated States' strategy and policy and bring together efforts where relevant. For example, interdependencies will include the super priority to shape and strengthen the focus on early years and families Children and Young People's Plan, the Mental Health Strategy, the Guernsey Housing Plan and the Economic Development Strategy.

Delivery and Governance

The workstream will commence with a time-limited development phase, culmination in the publication of the strategy and an implementation plan. Oversight will be provided through the Policy & Resources Committee in its role for policy coordination and the Committee will be responsible for ensuring cross-committee involvement and the engagement of the Guernsey Youth Commission as a partner. The strategy will need to remain responsive to emerging needs.

Impact

Looking to other countries that have acted to ensure young people have a voice in the community, are well supported and thriving, we can evidence the impact of the proposed youth strategy work. Examples of successful outcomes include:

Denmark – Adopted sustained investment in universal youth clubs, arts, sports and informal learning spaces; trained youth workers in mental health awareness; and remove cost barriers to access. This resulted in high participation rates in organised activities and evidence of improved confidence, peer connection and emotional resilience.

New Zealand – Adopted a Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy requiring every government decision to consider child wellbeing; used wellbeing indicators; and invested in culturally-grounded support. This resulted in improved service coordination and clearer accountability for youth mental health outcomes, as well as increased recognition of identity, belonging and confidence as policy goals.

United Kingdom – introduced the UK Youth Parliament, a democratically-elected body representing young people aged 11–18. Debates held in Parliament, with young people

having direct access to ministers and select committees. This resulted in improved mental wellbeing, self-esteem, social connection and agency across the cohort engaged in the parliament.

While this proposal supports better social outcomes, there would also be multiple economic benefits to Guernsey as a whole. This includes:

1. Improved economic productivity from young people's higher engagement at school and higher academic achievement leading to a stronger workforce and reduced absenteeism.
2. Reduced future health and social service costs as unresolved mental health problems can be more difficult to solve and require more expensive medical interventions and higher social support services; and
3. Benefits to families and communities, including reduced caregiver stress, better functioning communities and healthier future generations.

The above benefits resulting from engaging with young people and meeting their needs show that where a community focuses on the voice and needs of young people, better outcomes can be secured for those young people and the communities they live in.

Ultimately, these outcomes will help address known challenges in our island such as retention of talent and participation in education and the workforce.

Incorporating this amendment will help establish a shared vision for young people in Guernsey, strengthen trust between government and youth, and ensure policies are future-focused, inclusive, and sustainable.