

Media Release

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Children's champion visits Alderney to extend support for young people and families



Karen Brady

Alderney's Policy & Finance Committee (PFC) recently hosted the Bailiwick's Children's Convenor Karen Brady to discuss positive outcomes following a recent review of the Children's Law.

The 2008 Law, which is currently in the process of being updated, introduced the role of Children's Convenor and the Child, Youth and Community Tribunal (CYCT). The updates were fully backed by the March meeting of the States of Alderney.

The CYCT is a legal Tribunal that makes decisions to help improve the lives of children and young people under the age of eighteen in Guernsey and Alderney, while the Children's Convenor is responsible for investigating concerns about the safety, welfare or behaviour of children and young people when there might be a need for legal steps to be taken to ensure

their protection or wellbeing. The Convenor decides when a child or young persons is referred to the CYCT.

The CYCT is independent and made up of trained volunteers from the local community. Hearings are held in private with three Tribunal members who meet with the child and their parents or carers and the people who provide the family with help and support. The decisions that they make are legally binding, but the CYCT is much less formal than a court and hearings are held in an informal setting to ensure that everyone is able to take part.

The changes to the Children Law agreed by the States of Guernsey last year are intended to improve the overall childcare and welfare system by reducing delay and duplication and ensuring that children's circumstances are considered in the right forum at the right time.

PFC Members, concerned at the low number of referrals to the Convenor from Alderney, were advised by Ms Brady that the majority of referrals received by the Convenor were related to children in Guernsey where there were concerns about their care or they had committed an offence.

Ms Brady added that it's possible the services available to children on Alderney are not widely known and that people may not be aware that anyone can make a referral to the Convenor. She also highlighted that the low number of referrals may indicate that the regular liaison that takes place with several on-island bodies, including the police and local education specialists, is working well to identify and support children and young people who need additional support.

While in Alderney, Ms Brady met with a range of individuals who work with children and young people. It is hoped to extend this to include the Island Medical Centre and other relevant agencies in future visits.

Ms Brady said: "Alderney is a beautiful environment for children and young people to grow up in and is an important part of the remit of the Children's Tribunal System. Some children and young people will need additional help and support to ensure that they can reach their full potential and it is important that islanders are aware of where to get help and support and when it might be appropriate to refer a child or young person to the Convenor.

"During my trip, I was lucky enough to speak to a wide range of people, including the Head Teacher and Inclusion Manager at St Anne's School, the Greffier of the Court of Alderney and Police Sergeant James Taylor, to discuss how we can improve visibility and awareness of the CYCT and Convenor. I was also able to attend a meeting of the Alderney Support Group, which gave me an insight into how services are working together to support children and young people, as well as visit St Annes Playschool and Humming Bees Nursery.

"I look forward to further opportunities for myself and my colleagues to engage locally with the community."

There is currently no Alderney representation on the CYCT. It is anticipated that there will be a recruitment process for new Tribunal members later this year. The PFC is considering a public drop-in attended by the Tribunal President to provide more information about this

voluntary role and to encourage applications from Alderney.

Ms Brady will also provide feedback to PFC following the conclusion of meetings with other on-island bodies.

Details about the work of the Convenor and CYCT can be accessed at <https://www.convenor.org.gg/content/info-for-young-people>

Ends

Alderney media enquiries: ceo@alderney.gov.gg or alastair29110@gmail.com

For more information on the [Children's Tribunal System](#), please contact:

Sarah Jehan, PR Consultant

+44 (0) 7930 043 188, sarah@sarahjehancreative.com

About The Children's Tribunal System

The Children's Tribunal System safeguards and promotes the welfare of vulnerable children and young people who are in need of care, protection, guidance or control in Guernsey and Alderney. Established as part of the Children (Guernsey and Alderney) Law, 2008 The Children's Tribunal System is made up of three independent bodies: The Office of the Children's Convenor, The Child, Youth and Community Tribunal (CYCT) and The Children's Convenor and Tribunal Board.

Children or young people identified as vulnerable and who may be in need of compulsory help are referred to the Office of the Children's Convenor, a legally qualified independent holder of public office, who investigates the case. Referrals can come from anyone, but most often come from organisations such as Law Enforcement and the Health and Social Care Services.

If the Convenor believes there may be a need for compulsory intervention to ensure the child gets the help and support that they need, a hearing of the Tribunal is organised. The Tribunal will decide whether or not to make a legal order. The child/young person and their family or carers are central participants in the hearing that makes this decision.

Cases are heard by a panel of three Tribunal members, trained volunteers appointed by the Royal Court, who, on the basis of the facts and information presented, decide what action is required in the best interests of the child. The members are required to make an informed and unbiased decision which is legally binding.

The Children's Convenor and Tribunal are overseen by The Convenor and Tribunal Board, an independent body with strategic oversight to monitor the performance of the Convenor and President of the Tribunal and to provide them with guidance and support. The Board is also responsible for securing the resources required to enable the Children's Convenor, the President and the Tribunal to carry out their duties in accordance with the Law.