

Monday 25 September 2023

# Economic and social measures put in place to support recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic appear to have met objectives set

## Comptroller and Auditor General issues latest report

Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), Lynn Pamment, has today, 25 September 2023 published a report on ***Economic, Social and Health-related Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic***.

The report builds on previous reports the C&AG has issued relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. It evaluates:

- whether clear and measurable objectives were set out for schemes and funds established to achieve economic, social and health-related recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic
- whether appropriate controls were put in place to implement the schemes and funds in an effective way
- how the Government managed and monitored the delivery of the schemes and funds; and
- whether the schemes and funds have achieved their stated aims.

Lynn Pamment found that economic and social recovery schemes appear to have met objectives set. However, due to lack of performance information, it has not been possible to assess the success of all of the health-related schemes.

She concluded that the Government moved at pace to introduce a range of measures aimed at supporting economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures included schemes to support businesses directly, the Spend Local Scheme and the Fiscal Stimulus Fund (FSF). The C&AG found a high rate of overclaims for two of the schemes and at the time of the review £6.4 million of overclaimed money was still to be recovered.

Strong governance procedures were in place for the FSF although the evidence supporting the rationale for decisions taken was not always clear. Many of the FSF schemes undoubtedly resulted in improved facilities and buildings although some were delivered outside of the target timeframe.

The C&AG found that the Government decided very early in the COVID-19 pandemic that it needed to invest in schemes to improve the chances of recovering social welfare quickly. Working under significant pressure the Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department succeeded in establishing schemes and distributing the initial support to relevant delivery organisations quickly. Overall these schemes were well managed.

As part of improving social welfare, the Health and Community Service Department (HCS) was successful in attracting dental practices to take part in the children's dentistry scheme, and about 1,300 appointments have been generated since the start of the scheme. In addition, since January 2021 the Long COVID clinic has reviewed and managed affected Islanders, with over 450 appointments in 2022. This has led to many Islanders being successfully managed, treated and subsequently discharged from the service.

However for some health-related recovery schemes managed by HCS, how the funding was spent and how well the schemes' objectives were achieved were not monitored.

**Lynn Pamment said:**

"The measures put in place to protect businesses and individuals from the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic appear to have achieved the objectives established by Government. There have been relatively few business failures and employment has remained at or is better than pre-pandemic levels. There are early signs that the economy is recovering. It is however difficult to assess what would have happened to businesses without the support from the Government.

"The education-related schemes put in place to stimulate social recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic have achieved the objectives set to date. In particular, the education outcomes to date demonstrate no deterioration from what would have been expected if there had been no pandemic. This compares favourably with the performance in England.

"The COVID-19 pandemic recovery monies have helped to add capacity to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services which has enabled the service to maintain waiting times at a fairly consistent level despite a significant increase in the level of referrals.

"I have not been able to assess the results of some of the health-related schemes managed by HCS due to the lack of sufficient financial and performance information."

The report *Economic, Social and Health-related Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic* can be found at: <https://www.jerseyauditoffice.je>

**ENDS**

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**Notes to Editors:**

- The Office of Comptroller and Auditor General ('C&AG') was established in 2005 and operates under the Comptroller and Auditor General (Jersey) Law 2014
- The remit of the C&AG includes the audit of financial statements, corporate governance, internal control and wider consideration of public funds, often expressed as 'value for money'
- The 2023 Audit Plan can be found at: [www.jerseyauditoffice.je](http://www.jerseyauditoffice.je)
- Lynn Pamment took up the Office of C&AG on 1 January 2020 for a fixed term of seven years. Following the introduction of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Jersey) Law 2014 the term of office is fixed at seven years and is non-renewable.
- The Office of Comptroller and Auditor General is known as the 'Jersey Audit Office'.
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- The C&AG is prepared, on an occasional basis, to provide articles for publication in the local media, following a specific request and consideration of the relevant topic
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