



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Office of the Permanent Secretary

FROM : Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education

TO : Clerk of the House
Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity

DATE : 8th November 2016

SUBJECT : **First Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity on the Support Programmes and Services for Children whose Parent or Guardian was the Perpetrator or Victim of a Violence Offence**

I refer to your letter Ref. No. Parl: 14/3/42 Vol. II at caption dated 21st September 2016.

The attached written submissions are hereby made by the Ministry of Education in respect of the recommendations / comments contained in the *First Report of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, Equality and Diversity on the Support Programmes and Services for Children whose Parent or Guardian was the Perpetrator or Victim of a Violence Offence*.

Chief Education Officer
//f/Permanent Secretary (Ag.)
Ministry of Education

Written Responses

Findings – Objective 1

To understand the impact on children whose parent/guardian was the victim or perpetrator of a violent offence.

Recommendations of the Joint Select Committee (JSC)	Response of the Ministry of Education (MOE)
4.8. We recommend the employment of additional research staff and funding to the Authority to advance its research priorities.	The MOE affirms the need for further local research and culturally relevant, evidence based interventions and also recommends the re-establishment of the research department of Student Support Service Division (SSSD) to track date and student progress.
4.9. We recommend that local research is commissioned on the impact on primary and secondary school children, whose parent or guardian was the victim or perpetrator of a violent offence by the Office of the Prime Minister who has the gazetted ministerial responsibility for children. This research should include the collection of data from the prison population	<p>The MOE acknowledges the role of the Office of the Prime Minister who has the gazetted ministerial responsibility for children in the research agenda and the research should include the collection of data from the prison population which can inform interventions for this target group.</p> <p>Further recommendations: The MOE proposes further support with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A coordinated approach to data collection;• A unified data management system which will identify the relevant data set required and address any gaps in the system. <p>It can be noted that the MOE is in a position to encourage and initiate local research and utilize resources at the level of tertiary institutions within the MOE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The University of the West Indies- The University of Trinidad and Tobago- COSTATT <p>Established research continues to support preventative and developmental programmes to build coping and resiliency before students encounter major trauma.</p>

Recommendations of the Joint Select Committee (JSC)	Response of the Ministry of Education (MOE)
<p>4.10. We recommend that training is provided to CATT, MSDFS and VWSU staff to detect, diagnose and treat the fourteen (14) psychological conditions of children whose parent or guardian was the victim or perpetrator of a violent offence.</p>	<p>The Ministry of Education wishes to affirm the recommendation that training be provided to CATT, MSDF and VWSU staff to detect, diagnose and treat the fourteen (14) psychological conditions of children whose parent or guardian was a victim or perpetrator of a violent offence.</p> <p>Furthermore, the MOE is also aware that since SSSD staff is usually the first responders for intervention, and that their operations rely on direct interaction with students within the school setting, the MOE recommends that any such ministerial training includes SSSD staff .</p> <p>Further recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The training programme targeting the various service providers should reflect a coordinated approach to service delivery; 2. A quality service delivery system should begin with client/child (end user) in mind, the training should reflect levels of intervention required by each agency to avoid duplication of services; 3. Higher standards of professionalism and accountability (licence for professionals to maintain their practice).

Findings – Objective 2

To examine the **adequacy of programmes and services to support children** whose parent / guardian was the victim/perpetrator of a violent offence

Recommendations of the Joint Select Committee (JSC)	Response of the Ministry of Education (MOE)
4.31. We recommend that a comprehensive directory of the programmes and services with contact numbers should be published in the newspaper, websites and social media for use by members of the public.	The Ministry of Education affirms the recommendation for a directory of programmes and services by service providers with contact numbers should be published in the newspapers, websites and social media for use by members of the public.
4.32. We recommend the establishment of a behavioural intervention centre, initially as a pilot project, in collaboration with the MSDFS, MOE and CATT.	<p>The MOE is already engaged in the implementation of Learning Enhancement Centres (LECs) for students who are suspended for more than five days. It aims to provide intensive skill-building to dismantle the cycles of behavior that compromise student success, and takes a multi-pronged approach to so do.</p> <p>Research indicates that with this multi-pronged approach the outcome is far better than when these interventions are made separately.</p> <p>The MOE has in its remit the focus on re-integration of students and supports referrals to relevant agencies where necessary. The MOE, is of the view that the establishment of a behavioural intervention centre, should focus on intervention for needs more severe than what is currently in their remit. It supports the interventions by other agencies better designed to meet such needs.</p>
4.33. We recommend the development, monitoring and implementation of key performance indicators for the SSSD, National Family Services, CATT and Victim and Witness Support Unit (VWSU) in order to effectively assess the programmes and services for children whose parent or guardian was the victim or	<p>The MOE supports this recommendation to develop and implement social support services and interventions for children at the primary and secondary levels.</p> <p>Further, we recommend the establishment of a steering committee involving key stakeholders in the preparation of a monitoring and reporting plan to conduct of the following activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preparation of a work flow diagram utilizing an agency and inter-agency perspective 2. Establish data sets 3. Development of key performance indicators (KPIs)

<p>perpetrator of a violent offence for fiscal 2017.</p>	<p>4. Identification of Outputs and Outcomes</p> <p>This committee would be responsible for monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the deliverables of the project.</p>
<p>4.34. We recommend the allocation of additional financial resources for the psychosocial support for the 800 children placed at community residences</p>	<p>Highly recommended for prevention/ intervention and post-intervention services and assessment instruments.</p>
<p>4.35. We recommend the employment of additional staff at the Children and Family Services Unit of the Authority to deal with cases that seek to reunite children with families.</p>	<p>NA</p>
<p>4.36. We recommend the establishment of proper monitoring system for students after treatment. It is important for all the entities to be a part of this process in order to properly provide the necessary support system for the victim.</p>	<p>The MOE supports the recommendation and supports a coordinated approach to service delivery with an effective monitoring and evaluation component to measure impact and ensure sustainability.</p> <p>Additional recommendations</p> <p>Agencies involved in the care of children pay attention to:</p> <p>Institutional Strengthening, including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate staffing, proper management of staff • Staff qualifications, competencies and level of readiness for treating with these critical cases. • Organisational Climate (reduced levels of conflict, cooperation, role clarity, and personalization)
<p>4.37. We recommend the extension of the follow-up period by the MOE from three (3) months to a minimum of one (1) year for the 283 affected students. The follow-up should be done in collaboration with the other agencies.</p>	<p>The Ministry of Education supports this recommendation for an extension of follow-up period by MOE.</p> <p>Additional Recommendations:</p> <p>The Ministry of Education is in the process of renewing contracts for the SSSD staff who provide both preventative and on-going responsive care of these and other students.</p>

<p>4.38. We recommend that additional resources be allocated and new strategies be devised to reduce the number of vacancies within the SSSD and NFSD within fiscal</p>	<p>MOE is working to fill vacancies, including, among others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director/Manager • Coordinator Guidance and Counselling and Social Work • 7 SSSD District Coordinators • 160 School Social Workers • 166 Special Education Instructors • Behavioural Specialists • Clinical Psychologists • 14 School Psychologists • 109 Guidance counsellors • 21 Guidance Counselors for LEC • 31 Interpreter Assistants • 19 additional Special Education Student Aides • 2 Braille Repair Technicians • 2 Braille Conversion Operators
<p>4.39. The MOE is currently reviewing its approach to service delivery to schools/districts with a view to optimizing service based on data/ number of presenting cases.</p>	<p>The MOE supports the recommendation that the ratio of School Social Workers (SSW) to schools needs to be revisited in areas such as Caroni and Port of Spain.</p>

<p>4.40. We recommend additional programmes and services in the primary and secondary schools of Caroni and Port of Spain by the CATT and MOE.</p>	<p>The Ministry of Education highly supports the recommendation for additional services in the primary and secondary schools with specific emphasis on Caroni and Port of Spain.</p> <p>Additional Information: In March 2016, in the Caroni Education District , the MOE implemented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Learning Enhancement Centre to provide assessment and intensive skill-building and counselling services to suspended students and their parents. • At the Learning Enhancement Centre, skill building activities are done to help students manage the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Decision making and problem solving -Relationship/Communication skills -Anger Management -Conflict Resolution -Peer Pressure – bullying, cyber bullying -Learning styles and strategies -Human Sexuality – HIV/AIDS and other STIs; Abstinence -Personal Safety – appropriate use of social media; human trafficking -Addictions – substance use and abuse, gambling, pornography and social media -Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence • The Learning Enhancement Centre is staffed by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Guidance Officers/Counsellors -School Social Workers -School Safety Officers -Special Education Staff* -With access to a Behavioural Specialist and a Clinical Psychologist - And is soon to have Literacy and Numeracy tutors.

- The MOE has launched a specialized “School Improvement Programme” in the District of POS and Environs, with special emphasis on the Laventille community.

The School Improvement Programme project will focus on:

1. Infrastructure and Aesthetics -
2. Literacy and Teacher Training and Development - led by Curriculum Planning and Development Division (CPDD):
 - Conduct assessment of students to determine specific needs
 - assess literacy projects currently in schools
 - strengthen the literacy project
 - train teachers in remedial and cross-curricular teaching using Visual and Performing Arts
 - develop networking among schools
3. Student Violence and Indiscipline - schools will be required to develop, monitor and assess a violence and indiscipline plan for treating with their specific needs. This plan will be a subset of the School Development Plan where school administrators will implement and monitor school-based management.

Parenting in Education seeks to

- Establish productive partnerships between school, home and community
- Introduce parents/caregivers to knowledge and skills to empower them to be more effective in engaging their children as they support them academically.

4.41 We reiterate the 2015 recommendation for the increased recruitment of human at the VWSU to increase its complement of fourteen (14) contract staff.	NA
4.42. We recommend the provision of infrastructural facilities for execution of VWSU services outside of a police station.	NA

Findings - Objective 3

To identify and evaluate the current relationship amongst stakeholders of child support services

JSC Recommendations	MOE Response
4.49. Although a Children's Registry is being established by the Authority to track a child from birth, we recommend there is also a need for an interagency database to track a child's movement amongst government agencies.	The MOE highly affirms the recommendation for an interagency database to track a child's movement amongst government agencies.
4.51. We recommend that stakeholders meet on a quarterly basis to discuss plans of actions of each agency and to eliminate duplicity of effort.	The MOE highly supports the recommendation that stakeholders discuss the plans of action for each agency and seek to eliminate duplicity..