

NEWS

Civil partnerships 'have a place in our society'

Change not feasible, says rights group

By Michael Morris
mmorris@jerseyeveningpost.com

ABOLISHING civil partnerships is likely to cause too many problems to be feasible, according to Christian May, the vice-president of a Channel Islands gay rights charity.

This week Chief Minister Ian Gorst announced plans to introduce same-sex marriage by the end of 2017, and indicated that civil partnerships, which are currently the only option for gay couples, could be phased out.

Senator Gorst made the announcement as he revealed the results of a States consultation which showed that 54 per cent of Islanders supported the idea of gay marriage.

The report accompanying the consultation said that two factors would have to be addressed before civil partnerships could be abolished – ensuring that arrangements are in place for existing civil partnerships to be transferred to marriages, and improving the laws on cohabitation.

If either of these could not be fulfilled, the States would work towards extending civil partnerships for heterosexual couples to give all members of the community the same rights.

The report stated: 'The introduction of opposite-sex civil partnerships



Plans were announced this week to introduce same-sex marriage in Jersey by the end of 2017

found favour with many respondents. On reading their comments, however, it would seem that their primary concern was the need for legal rights and protection for cohabiting couples, as opposed to the extension of civil partnerships per se.'

Mr May, vice-president of the LGBT charity Liberate, said: 'The ideal scenario for the Chief Minister's Department is to provide complete equality

in a single-tier system. 'I can understand why they would want to do this, but it is going to be very difficult in practice.

'My personal preference would be that anyone could be regarded as married, but I know of people in civil partnerships who are very happy and may feel uncomfortable entering into marriage.

'What we don't want is a situation

where any of those couples currently in a civil partnership feel forced to change their status. If that is the case, we have to make sure equality is found another way, and that would be done by extending civil partnerships to heterosexual couples.'

The consultation was launched earlier this year after the States voted against legalising gay marriage until further research was carried out.

The 12 days of (fraud at) Christmas

THE States Police have launched an anti-fraud campaign in an effort to protect islanders from falling victim to cyber fraudsters while shopping online for Christmas presents.

The 'Twelve online frauds of Christmas' campaign was launched on Friday – the so-called Black Friday, which marks the start of the busiest four days of internet shopping of the year.

Jersey police are working in partnership with the City of London Police, the UK's leading force in tackling fraud, to warn shoppers about criminals who specialise in tricking internet users with the promise of great online deals or big cash savings.

Detective Chief Inspector Chris Beechey, of the States Police, said: 'Cyber crime is increasingly affect the Channel Islands. By drawing on the expertise and information developed by other forces, we can best advise the public in Jersey on how to protect themselves with regard to this particular type of heartless crime.'

The States Police will highlight the threat of potential festive frauds in a series of online messages for a total of 12 working days.

The police have asked anyone who falls victim to online fraud to report it by contacting them directly on 612612.

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CHRISTMAS WRAPPED UP! From the Jersey Evening Post

Act early on services for the young 'and benefit in long term'

By Heather Chalmers
hchalmers@jerseyeveningpost.com

THE new Home Affairs Minister intends to defend frontline support services for young people against budget cuts to ensure that early intervention remains a priority in the Island.

Deputy Kristina Moore, who was appointed to the ministerial position following her re-election in October, said that services such as the YES project, which provides free counselling for young people, were important in tackling youth crime.

The popular service was set up in 2008 with psychologists providing hourly sessions for people aged 14 to 25 during the day and in the evenings.

Deputy Moore said: 'It would make sense to continue funding the YES project, but also the youth services in general. They also have a Friday night mobile football pitch which is taken around the Island to encourage young people to take part in sport.

'Elsewhere, there are services such as street pastors and Brighter Futures, which supports families. They do all receive some States funding, and part of my role is defending a lot of these frontline services and educational projects.

'The YES project does not come under my remit, but I intend to encourage my colleagues in the Council of Ministers to support these services as best we can because I am a big supporter of early intervention.

'The project is an element which has helped to tackle youth crime in particular, along with community engagement from the police.'

Deputy Moore said that frontline services were not at present facing a particular threat from budget cuts, but she stressed that they were 'a very important part of the community'.

She added: 'We all have to be careful with our budgets over the coming years, but I am looking at it from a different perspective than



Home Affairs Minister Kristina Moore: 'Part of my role is defending a lot of the frontline services and educational projects'

a purely financial one. If you are spending well on the early intervention stages, you will benefit in the long run because people would get so much help. Early intervention saves on money and social damage in the long run.

'There are a lot of difficult decisions to make in favour of early intervention as a policy. It is always better to prevent rather than cure a problem.'

Deputy Moore said that although mental ill-health was not necessarily connected to crime, she placed emphasis on the mental well-being of the population being integral to Islanders and the community.

She said: 'Youth crime in the Island is down to its lowest level in a long time, and we hope that will continue. A lot has been going on in terms of early intervention and with the police in terms of community engagement. People are now starting to understand that being mentally healthy is as important as being physical healthy.'