



## **REMARKS**

**The Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors**

**The Hon Tinee Furbert JP, MP**

**Budget Press Conference**

**February 24, 2026**

Good afternoon Bermuda,

Today I will share with you the key initiatives that will be supported by the 2026/27 Budget allocation for the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors.

This year, the Ministry has been allocated \$97.2 million . . . an increase of \$6 million, or 6.57%. The operational budget for Ministry Headquarters is \$16.1 million dollars.

This funding strengthens our ability to support seniors, empower young people, assist working families, and protect the most vulnerable in our community.

Now I will provide an overview of the initiatives under the Ministry's remit:

A major initiative within this Budget is the creation of a dedicated Disability Unit within the Ageing and Disability Services. \$160,000 has been budgeted to support the development of a Disability Unit within ADS, which will complement our policy team. In its initial phase, the Unit will be led by a full-time Programme Manager, with an amended Accessibility Officer role within Ageing and Disability Services covering both accessibility compliance and public awareness responsibilities

This unit will enhance care coordination and bring us into closer alignment with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Its focus will be on improving accessibility and inclusion policy, strengthening services, and raising awareness to ensure that persons living with disabilities are fully supported and fully included in every aspect of our society.

- The Office of Ageing and Disability Services (ADS) will be able to continue with their hardship support service for our seniors who have no income and no family support.
- KMCC will also under the 2026/27 budget continue with the expansion of hours of programmes and services to clients and families from 2:30 pm to 5:45 pm.

Families find it challenging to have their loved ones at home early during the day when they work. Therefore, the programme will continue with its extended hours to 5:45 pm to allow family and caregivers to complete their full day of work and not worry about their loved ones.

Capital investment will also continue for the development of a new senior day care facility at the former Gilbert Institute site in Paget. \$1.8 million dollars has been provided for the continued design and renovation works. This facility will provide structured day programmes, respite services and recreational activities that promote dignity, well-being and social connection for our aging population.

Youth engagement remains a key priority. This year, we will establish a National Youth Council to ensure that young Bermudians have a structured and meaningful voice in policymaking, creating new avenues for civic participation, leadership development and dialogue. In addition, \$20,000 is being provided to conduct a National Youth Survey.

The Office of Youth Affairs will also continue staff training to better support neurodivergent youth, ensuring that its youth programmes provide the appropriate care and assistance they need.

The 2026/27 budget allotment allows us to continue our extended day programmes for children of shift workers at the central zone community centre; extended weekend operation hours for the western zone community centre; and expansion of the before, after and out-of-school programmes at the Francis Patton, Elliot and Purvis Primary Schools.

Additional funding in the amount of \$771,000, will support nursing homes and homelessness initiatives through a more comprehensive approach that emphasizes prevention, early intervention and coordinated essential services. Some of the organizations include: Meals on Wheels, Centre Against Abuse, The Salvation Army, Age Concern, HOME Ltd, Vision Bermuda, Tomorrow's Voices, and nursing homes.

We are also modernising the Charities Act to strengthen anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism safeguards, enhancing transparency, protecting organisations from exploitation, and reinforcing public confidence in the non-profit sector.

We are taking practical steps to ease the burden on working families. Amendments to the Child Day Care Allowance Act will increase financial assistance for families with multiple children under the age of four, helping to improve affordability and support workforce participation.

\$250,000 in additional funding is provided for expansion of the Child Day Care Allowance programme. In addition, the income threshold for Financial Assistance pensioners has increased from \$500 to \$800, allowing recipients to retain more of their earned income while maintaining essential support \$1.5 million dollars has been allocated for these amendments to the Excluded Income threshold.

Further, to better address clients' mental health challenges and enhance treatment outcomes, part of the additional funding of \$343,000 awarded to Financial Assistance which will assist with the increase to the maximum number of mental health outpatient treatment services or sessions from six (6) per year to a maximum of twenty-four (24) per year. The maximum rate amended for mental health sessions was amended from \$840 per year to \$840 per month.

The operational budget for the Department of Child & Family Services is \$22.8 million dollars.

- There is a proven need with the caseload numbers for the hiring of a second Domestic Liaison Social Worker to continue the work of the Family Preservation programme (\$120,000)

- Funding to hire four (4) temporary additional Residential Care Officers (RCO's) within the Brangman Home residential facility (\$339,000)

In conclusion, this Budget is centred on people. It strengthens services for seniors, expands opportunities for youth, supports persons with disabilities, and provides meaningful relief for families. Together, we are moving forward responsibly, thoughtfully, and confidently for all Bermudians.

Thank you.