



Government of Bermuda
Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

by

The Hon. Tinée Furbert, JP, MP

Introduction of the Atlantic Child Advocacy Alliance

Friday, November 21st, 2025

Mr. Speaker,

I rise this morning very much pleased to share with my Honourable colleagues about an exciting and progressive initiative: the Atlantic Child Advocacy Alliance.

Mr. Speaker,

You may recall that in September this year, the Government of Bermuda and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) entered into a formal agreement through a Letter of Intent that formalized the intention to closely collaborate for improving child advocacy services in British Overseas Territories across the North and South Atlantic.

The Letter of Intent was officially signed by Mr Stephen Doughty, MP, UK Minister of State for British Overseas Territories, on behalf of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and the UK Government, committing to facilitate the foundation of an ‘Atlantic Child Advocacy Alliance’ with the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors on behalf of the Bermuda Government.

Mr. Speaker,

As a foundation, Bermuda has made significant strides to ensure a sustainable, high-quality Litigation Guardian service in the long term. Key actions include the development of Litigation Guardian Practice Guidance and the strengthening of

relationships with the Judiciary. The Atlantic Child Advocacy Alliance will now facilitate formal best practice training in litigation guardian services across the North and South Atlantic region, enhancing cross-jurisdictional capabilities.

Supported by the financial commitment of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and the extensive knowledge and experience of Consultant Anthony Douglas OBE, Bermuda has taken the lead in creating a comprehensive litigation guardian framework, culminating in the establishment of an Office of the Litigation Guardian.

This achievement is a testament to the Government's vision and commitment to safeguarding children. It is one that should be celebrated by all of us. Bermuda stands as a model of excellence for British Overseas Territories throughout the Atlantic Region, demonstrating what can be accomplished when commitment and collaboration align in pursuit of the best interests of our children.

Mr. Speaker,

This partnership emphasizes child safeguarding as an overriding priority. The UK Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office or FCDO has commissioned Mr. Anthony Douglas CBE, Consultant on Safeguarding, to steer the building of the Alliance and has funded a consultancy from July 2025 through March 2026.

Both the UK and Bermuda Governments will work collaboratively to develop the 'Atlantic Child Advocacy Alliance' for child advocacy services. This alliance will pool expertise from Bermuda and the Southern Ocean British Overseas Territories, namely the Falkland Islands, St Helena, Ascension Island, and Tristan da Cunha.

Mr. Speaker,

This will be a reciprocal arrangement that aims to address the technical needs of each Territory by facilitating the sharing of knowledge and expertise regarding litigation guardian services within a structured framework. The partnership builds upon the past three years of technical support provided to Bermuda by the UK FCDO, which was instrumental in shaping and strengthening Bermuda's litigation guardian

services and culminated in the establishment of an official Office of the Litigation Guardian in March 2024.

Over the past three years, joint efforts among the UK FCDO, the Government of Bermuda, the Bermuda Court System, and other stakeholders have been solution-oriented, focusing on developing innovative approaches to enhance the understanding of the litigation guardian service. This collaboration has also promoted greater cooperation among all stakeholders to ensure that the best interests of the child are prioritized.

Mr. Speaker,

The initiative seeks to explore the capacity for child advocacy across the Southern Atlantic British Overseas Territories. For this purpose, child advocacy encompasses both lay advocacy and the children's guardian role in its various forms. The smaller size of these Territories compared to Bermuda means that the need for a litigation guardian arises only occasionally. Therefore, litigation guardians and Governments in these regions see value in establishing a link with Bermuda. For example, a litigation guardian from the Falkland Islands could be an option for an assignment to a Bermuda case if Bermuda's capacity is limited or if specific circumstances make it more appropriate to involve a guardian from another Overseas Territory. Bermuda might reciprocate should this be possible and in the best interests of the child in question in the other Territory. Such exchanges would proceed only if collaborative advantage can be established, that is, the exchange is beneficial for both overseas territories.

Mr. Speaker,

As part of the Atlantic Alliance program, there will be virtual training sessions for six months for all overseas territories, which commenced in September and will continue until February 2026. The first training module focused on identifying and intervening on behalf of children and young people experiencing neglect. Overall, the outcomes of the training include:

1. Establishing a practical model of reciprocity across the Atlantic Overseas Territories and a Mutual Offer that can be accessed in the future as needed;

2. Developing updated Litigation Guardian Practice Guidance and Practice Directions for use in family cases in the Bermuda Courts, thereby improving child-centered case practice;
3. Creating Island Practice Standards for St Helena and the Falklands;
4. Supporting the British Overseas Territory, St Helena in developing a lay guardian service, which has already been achieved.

Mr. Speaker,

As we have strengthened the Litigation Guardian Framework in Bermuda, many valuable lessons can be learned from our experiences and established best practices, while acknowledging that other British Overseas Atlantic Territories face similar challenges and are at different stages in their safeguarding journeys.

The Atlantic Child Advocacy Alliance represents a significant step forward in child safeguarding. Through formal partnership, shared expertise, and a structured approach to training and best practices, this initiative will strengthen child advocacy and litigation guardian services throughout the Atlantic region. By pooling resources, delivering targeted training, and fostering reciprocal support, the alliance aims to ensure that every territory benefits from enhanced capability and cooperation, ultimately prioritizing the best interests of children no matter where they reside.

In closing **Mr. Speaker,**

Let me state that there is much work being undertaken to develop a sustainable quality litigation guardian framework for Bermuda, and specifically for our children, so that their voices are heard.

In February 2026, I will be presenting the final Litigation Guardian Practice Guidance for Bermuda that the Consultant is currently working with my Ministry to develop. I will also share about other initiatives that have been embedded in the litigation guardian programme to continue to strengthen and support the services of the Office of the Litigation Guardian.

Thank you,

Mr. Speaker