



Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Children and Families

Monday, 14th October 2024

Panel:

Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central (Chair)

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville (Vice-Chair)

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée of St. Helier South

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade

Witnesses:

Connétable R.P. Vibert of St. Peter, The Minister for Children and Families

Deputy M.R. Ferey of St. Saviour, Assistant Minister for Children and Families

Mr. R. Sainsbury, Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.

Ms. D. Marriott, Director, Children's Services

Mr. D. Bowring, Associate Director, Mental Health and Well-being

Mr. K. Posner, Director, Improvement and Transformation, C.Y.P.E.S.

Ms. M. Clark, Senior Policy Officer

[15:00]

Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier (Chair):

Welcome to this quarterly hearing of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. Today is 14th October. I would like to draw everyone's attention to the following. This hearing will be filmed and streamed live. The recording and transcript will be published afterwards on the States Assembly website. All electronic devices, including mobile phones, should be switched to silent. For introductions now, I am the chair of the panel, Deputy Catherine Curtis.

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville (Vice-Chair):

My name is Mark Labey. I am the vice-chair of the panel.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée of St. Helier South:

I am Deputy Porée, a panel member.

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade:

I am Deputy Helen Miles, panel member.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Constable Richard Vibert, Minister for Children and Families.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Deputy Malcolm Ferry, Assistant Minister for Children and Families.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Rob Sainsbury, Chief Officer for the Department of C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department).

Director for Improvement and Transformation, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Keith Posner, Director for Improvement and Transformation at C.Y.P.E.S.

Senior Policy Officer:

Michelle Clark, Senior Policy Officer.

Director, Children's Services:

Donna Mariott, Director of Children's Services.

Associate Director, Mental Health and Well-being:

Darren Bowring, Associate Director of Mental Health and Well-being.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thank you everyone. We have got 1½ hours for this hearing, so I will start with the questions. Minister, the panel wrote to you in July and in your response you advised that there was a shortfall in up-to-date policies across Children's Social Care. Please could you tell us a bit more about that, like which policies are affected and the timeframe?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Actually what I am going to say is, obviously the outcome of all our policies is the best possible outcome for children in care and, in fact, children in the Island. Yes, there was a shortfall and work has been done towards that and I am actually going to ask ... Donna I think is probably best placed to give us a review of that.

Director, Children's Services:

There are policies and procedures but they are out of date, some of them, and it was felt that we needed to do a whole scale review both of the policies and procedures in the residential estate as well as across Children's Social Care more generally. That review has been underway. We have had somebody particularly procured to do that ... commissioned to do that piece of work for us and to get all of those policies and procedures uploaded into one system called tri.x is the plan - and that is a system that they use in the U.K. (United Kingdom) - that would then be able to be regularly updated and reviewed in a more consistent way. We have got 2 bits of work, the residential estate policy and procedure review and rewrite and the same in social care. They will be starting to come online I think probably sometime in November. We have already started. Quite a lot have been written, but we are trying to do them in a more coherent and more consistent way. So it is well in hand.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, great. I have got a few more ... sorry.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I was going to say that there is little doubt that that was an area where there were shortfalls. I think that had been the case for some time. I am quite enthusiastic about the work that Donna is doing. I would say, in particular, the residential plan. But we will come back to that at a future date and tell you more about it.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That sounds good, yes. Okay, I have a few more questions there but they may not apply seeing as it is being updated right now. I was going to ask: are current policies clear for staff, so what they have already got to go on?

Director, Children's Services:

So that is part of the same piece of work really; the need for those policies and procedures to be current, regularly reviewed. We have built a new process around that, around creating a policy group that will review them regularly and then they will get circulated to staff in a more consistent way. We have got work underway about things like the foster carer's handbook so that then staff

are clear about what the offer is and how that is delivered as well. That will happen, that the policies will get signed off and then they will get shared with staff and more consistently rolled out so that they are clear and are more able to talk consistently about them.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Are the current policies, or the future policies, seen by service users as well? Are they able to see what these policies are?

Director, Children's Services:

It depends, I suppose, which policies and procedures. Some things will, things like the care leavers' offer will be online. That is currently under review for completion for December, will be signed off by the Corporate Parenting Board. So it depends, I suppose, which policies. Some are outward facing and some will be processes and procedures that staff need to do in their day-to-day work that you would not really have on an external site. But tri.x will probably be quite broadly open. It is not the sort of thing you would necessarily close within a department.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That is tri.x?

Director, Children's Services:

Yes. It is really an online system that they have to have the procedures so that staff can go in through a web-based system. It means that you can keep them much more current and up-to-date and regularly reviewed because they get ... the company that run it help you to keep on top of that as well, so it is done by regular review.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thank you. So my next question: in the public sector staffing statistics for 30th June 2024, there were 35 vacancies reported in C.Y.P.E.S. for social workers. Could you confirm where these roles lie? How many are in C.A.M.H.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services), how many in Children's Social Care, for example?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I do not believe there are actually any in C.A.M.H.S., that is correct.

Director, Children's Services:

No.

The Minister for Children and Families:

No. Where we do have vacancies, the vast majority of those are actually covered by agency staff, so it is not that there is a gap. The exact numbers, if we look at Children's Social Care, C.A.M.H.S., young people across them, we have currently 14 vacancies. Children's Social Care have 7. Strangely enough there are 5 in C.A.M.H.S., but those are actually all covered. So there are no ... and then young people, the Youth Service, there are 2 vacancies, so all together 14. I do not know if, Donna, you want to say a little bit more on that. We are interviewing for a number of those roles and, as I say, agency staff are covering the positions at the moment.

Director, Children's Services:

So they are the live vacancies that we have running at any one moment in time that are actually in the system that there are adverts out for. People are in either the interview process or on the selection process.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Are they social workers, mostly?

The Minister for Children and Families:

These are social, yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

And those roles are covered by agency staff at the moment?

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, we have not got unfilled vacancies in the social work system so they are covered by agency staff that backfill them.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Can you confirm if any of these roles will be impacted or removed as a result of the Government's recruitment freeze?

Director, Children's Services:

No.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Definitely not?

Director, Children's Services:

No.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Firstly, most of those roles are front line services and of course some of them would be under grade 11, but even if they are not they would not be impacted by the current recruitment.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Now I just have a couple of questions about zero hours contracts; 566 staff in C.Y.P.E.S. were reported to be on zero-hour contracts. Can you confirm how many of them are in children's social care, C.A.M.H.S. and the Youth Service?

The Minister for Children and Families:

In C.A.M.H.S. there are no zero-hour contracts. Children's Social Care there are 100 and in young people's, the Youth Service, there are 87. The Youth Service, you would expect there to be a large number of zero-hours contracts because within the various youth centres we have around the Island, of course, many people may only work 2 or 3 hours in the evening. We need to have adequate levels of staffing, which there always are. Of course, some of these people, they will have other work, but they will come in to do the work in the Youth Service. Children's Social Care, that is about, again, ensuring that we are adequately staffed, but of course that can fluctuate around the number of children that we actually have, and the needs of the various care homes. I am not unhappy about those numbers. They are there out of necessity.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Could I just ask a bit more about that? Because I can imagine, like bank staff, for example, but I still do not really understand why they would be on zero-hours contract.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

It is a core part of critical staffing infrastructure. So for any 24/7 care-facing service, whether it is children's or adults, you will always need to have staff who are able to work flexibly, and many of those staff within that field of work will opt to want to work on a zero-hours arrangement, whether that is through the bank or directly within a specified care facility. It is a critical part of our business continuity. Without it we would likely have an adverse impact of not having adequate cover because we would not meet some of the workers' flexibility of how they want to work.

Director, Children's Services:

I think quite a lot of those staff as well will have a proper contract and they will have a zero-hours contract on top, so they will be employed.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

There are 46 staff within the 100 within Children's Services that have a substantive contract.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Will that include things like family support workers as well who support children after school?

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, same. Yes. They might just do 2 hours with a particular family every night or one night a week.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

And residential child care officers as well are included?

Director, Children's Services:

Yes. It always looks a lot but it actually is not. It is what you would expect every system to have; a good system.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So you have explained the reasons for that but can you explain whether it is considered a risk for the operation of certain C.Y.P.E.S. services to have these numbers on zero-hours contracts?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Having that number of zero-hours contracts, I think, with the ... we explained, there are fluctuating levels of staff that are required, and it is difficult to work without reasonably high levels of people who are on a zero-hours contract. Because otherwise you would be permanently in a position of being overstaffed, and there were not actually ... or understaffed. If they were all permanent positions, we would be overstaffed.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Yes. I would say even if we had a zero vacancy rate and a fully-staffed complement, you would still require a flexible working pattern process for this kind of workforce, because they are 24/7, many of them. You need them to be able to react to emergency sickness, to additional demand, to more enhanced ratio to child care support. You need to be able to do that for a flexible contract and that is why zero hours particularly are often aligned to care-facing sector when they are critical.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I can see that but also they could just say: "No, we are not coming in", they do not have to come in when they are asked.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

They could, and if it is not convenient to their working pattern they will, but they enter into the arrangement knowing that that is part of the option of being able to deploy. So you, as part of the process, have an understanding of who is available, who is able to cover and that is the nature of how a bank process will run.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So you do not think it is a risk for the operations?

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

No, I think it provides resilience.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Can I just ask a question? Do you see a big difference between flexible working patterns and zero-hour contract arrangements and the impacts on the worker? Because there are 2 differences, is it not? A zero-hour contract means the organisation, yourself, will have no kind of obligation to provide those hours, neither will the employee have the obligation to answer to those hours. The flexible pattern means that the amount of hours are there regardless, but they are given at different times of the day to the employees. Is that a difference that makes it ... that is what we are trying to talk behind, that is the guarantees of the amount of hours per week or per month.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Like a minimum hours, is that you are talking about?

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Flexible pattern; not really. Flexible pattern you could do say morning shifts, evening shifts at different rates but you would be doing a guaranteed certain amount of zero hours that is taken away completely. That is that vulnerability of the employee we may be wanting to touch on.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think some of these people actually want that.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Well they do and this is a sector where we have a high ... where we need the high requirement for additional hours to be worked. So it is the opposite of opportunity for shifts to be covered in reality. The possibility of them not having adequate work to fill is not an experience that we have. They are actually able to work as many hours as they would probably need to because of the nature of the business.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

I suppose this is what we call the overtime, is it not, when there is extra time they have to work?

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Well we have overtime, we have zero hours and we have flexible working; they have all 3 areas within this particular workforce.

[15:15]

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

I am just trying to make a point they are all different from zero-hour contracts, flexible work, overtime; they are all different amounts of work that are given or taken away from an employee.

Director, Children's Services:

It is a contractual arrangement that suits the employee as well because they do not want to have a fixed amount of hours they have to work in a week. They might want to just do 2 hours one evening a week when they have got time and then if that matches with when we need the 2 hours. So it is a 2-way need. It is meeting the business need but the employee's needs as well.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Of course since the legislation changed last year any employee has the right to ask for their contract to be reassessed if they are not on the appropriate contract for the work that they are doing. So our employees will be fully aware of that situation.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thank you. Just a question now about training. How many social workers are trained on-Island?

The Minister for Children and Families:

We have got figures from basically the 2019 entrance. So it is a 3-year course; 2019 to 2022, there were 7 people in that course. In the course that started the next year, there were another 7. And 2022 to 2025, there were 10. Now out of those, we actually had 14 people who were offered placements. I think out of those, 3 of them have left us since. We still have 11 of those remaining, which I think, given some of them started this process in 2019, that is not an unrealistic loss. I think it is reasonable. The reason is one person actually emigrated, so cannot do anything about that. Another went to work for, in the same field, but for one of the third-party organisations. You are bound to get movement from Children's Services to other organisations. One of them decided that

they wanted to move into the adult sector. So still working for us, but have gone into adult social care. I think that is quite a good record. We continue to have people going through that process.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Well, that is good. I was going to just check with you, the social work degree is still running?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It is currently running?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, good. Do you think there is capacity to build up more?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I certainly would like to see more.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Did a new cohort start this year in 2024?

The Minister for Children and Families:

It certainly did.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

We are in the process of getting the numbers.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, we need the numbers, but there is definitely one running at the moment.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So there is a first year running this year?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Because there has been a change of provider, has there not, from University of Sussex to University of Limerick, I believe?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

But it is definitely running.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Now I just want to ask a question about family day carers. Can you confirm what oversight you have of the requirements that are put on family day carers because we have heard that the number of them has dropped dramatically over the last few years?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Right, so are you able to ...?

Director, Children's Services:

Can I ask what you mean by family day carers, I think?

The Connétable of Grouville:

My wife is one.

Director, Children's Services:

It is a different part of the different Ministerial ... sorry.

The Minister for Children and Families:

That is not part of our ...

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

We can provide you with that information.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thank you.

The Minister for Children and Families:

But it is not actually our responsibility.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It is difficult to see sometimes where everything is.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I know. Even I have problems.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, that would be helpful, thank you. The next question as well, it is a little bit unclear where this sits, which is why I am asking it. Minister, do you feel there is sufficient support for the educational psychology service and whether this comes through C.A.M.H.S. or through Education?

The Minister for Children and Families:

It is in Education. They are different services.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So some of them, I thought, came under C.A.M.H.S., but it is still Education?

The Minister for Children and Families:

No, it is all Education.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

They work closely with C.A.M.H.S. but it all sits under the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning's portfolio.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thank you. I think now we are on to you.

The Connétable of Grouville:

It is I. Minister, please, can you explain what updates are currently being made to the foster carers' handbook and information pack?

The Minister for Children and Families:

The handbook will be ready for review by the senior leadership by the end of this month. It is going to establish clear guidance and expectations of foster carers, including procedures on seeking approval before purchasing items. In addition, there will be an appendix that provides the maximum cost attached to items that need to be purchased, such as mattresses, bedding, et cetera. I think

that giving people clarity is quite important because at the moment I do not think there is that clarity. So once approved by the senior managers, the handbook will be launched at an event where we invite all foster carers. They will be able to share their views with us and the head of service but that is, as I say, going to be due for review by the end of this month. I would hope that we are looking at having that event by the end of this year.

Director, Children's Services:

Yeah, it will be ready for publishing by the end of November and launched subsequently.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Having said that, we do our utmost to provide in the meantime clarity to the foster carers. We have regular meetings with them.

The Connétable of Grouville:

That was my next question.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, they have visits. Do you want to ask your question or shall I just ...?

The Connétable of Grouville:

No, you just answered it.

The Minister for Children and Families:

There are supervision meetings of which, not a bad ... 91 per cent of them were on time. Obviously there is a little bit of ... 9 per cent is not a massive amount where we have failed to be on time, but 91 per cent of them are on time; 85 per cent of foster carers had their home and safety check; 5 foster homes require an up-to-date home and safety check. Unfortunately, the delay here was due to a change in social worker, but we are on that now. 100 per cent of the annual reviews have been held on time, and 100 per cent of foster carers have up-to-date D.B.S. (Disclosure and Barring Service). What we have also done is we have ... as well as quarterly meetings with the foster carers, we have also had a couple of social events where we have been. In fact, I find those quite useful because people will quite often approach you on one of those events to have a confidential chat or whatever about things that they might not necessarily raise in a meeting in front of everybody else. We have improved the support that they get and I think we have actually ... the feedback we have had is that they recognise very much so that there has been a change in the support and how they are regarded. Because, I think if we go back, there had been a loss of foster carers over the years and we are now reversing that trend.

The Connétable of Grouville:

I would like to drill down a little bit more into the meetings between foster parents and social workers. The panel was advised before that the frequency of regular supervision meetings between foster parents and the supervising social worker was 4-weekly, 6-weekly or 12-weekly. We just would like a little bit of clarity what your aim is.

The Minister for Children and Families:

The 4, 6 and 12 is down to the specific needs of the child. So, Donna, you can probably provide the background. I know high-level what they are, but are you able to do that?

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, that is fine. So it will be led by the child. I suppose a child who probably is new to placement you would expect for them to be visited more regularly with the foster carers because they need more support or where you have got perhaps a child where they have got more challenges and the foster carers have got more struggles with that, you would want them to be visiting more regularly. But perhaps a child that is really stable and settled and on a permanent care plan, you probably need to visit less and foster carers will need less support around that. So it should be really driven by the care around the child's needs.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Have you got the capacity within the service to increase that frequency?

Director, Children's Services:

It has got plenty of capacity in fostering; yes, I am quite confident about that.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Another question we wanted to ask: does the fostering team have dedicated staff or did the staff work across various aspects of Children's Social Care?

Director, Children's Services:

Just dedicated. There is a fostering and an adoption team but they are still working on just their area of practice. So we are fostering social workers in there that just do fostering only.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you very much.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can I just ask, with a new placement or a very challenging situation, is it still only 4-weekly?

Director, Children's Services:

No.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Because it can be more than that?

Director, Children's Services:

It might be more. Yes, you might end up out there every day. If a child needed it or a carer was really struggling, you would expect the fostering social worker to try to support that. We have got other support in there. It might be that C.A.M.H.S. help, there might be lots of different aspects to the support package around those carers. There might be a family support worker. There can be other bits of support put in as well. So, it should be leads led.

The Connétable of Grouville:

And the frequency ...

Director, Children's Services:

It is the same as any child that we have got probably in the system that are receiving support from social care. We should be flexing that. Visiting is according to what they need.

The Minister for Children and Families:

So, I think you see 4, 6, and 12 as the minimum.

Director, Children's Services:

It is a standard.

The Minister for Children and Families:

That is a minimum. But I think there are ... we have got cases where it could very well be, initially, a daily contact.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is it the supervising social worker that is the co-ordinator of the care plan?

Director, Children's Services:

No, it is the child's social worker that always co-ordinates the care plan. The fostering, the supervising social worker should be focused on the carers only, the carers' needs. You have those blunt timescales, like the 2, the 4, the 12. It is just our way of performance managing, so when we

run our reports it helps us that we have got to measure something. If you measure those timescales, you can always see where the things are happening at the minimum standards that you would require. Then you would look underneath that further, it dips up with the work as well.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

I think it is my turn and I am going to ask a few questions about the corporate parenting strategy. The last publicly available minutes to the Corporate Parenting Board includes an open action to review sufficiently in the system for the number of children currently impaired and potentially future capacity needs. Can you describe what that would include and how it is being done?

The Minister for Children and Families:

The Corporate Parenting Board, we have actually made some changes to the way that is structured; partially, after a visit to Medway and seeing their Corporate Parenting Board, in which they use subgroups. So that instead of having a quarterly meeting and deciding that you are going to do something and then waiting until the next meeting, the subgroups are working continually and then reporting back. Now, we have only just introduced them, but it is already apparent that it has made quite a dramatic change to the Corporate Parenting Board. You can actually see quite clearly that there are actions. Now, you were asking about looking at sufficiency, and that is included in one of the themes. What we already have is a draft plan looking at our existing portfolio of properties, the number of children, and then extrapolating that with the numbers that we think will be coming through the system over the next probably 5 years, is it? Five-year plan and what we are going to need by way of premises to ensure that there is sufficiency in the system. That includes within it a complete, I think, revamping, for instance, of the Greenfields estate. I say the Greenfields estate because there are a number of buildings there which could be put. The Greenfields building itself has overcapacity in that there is a whole half of it that is unused. There are probably in that one, if we look at remodelling parts of the building, not all that building needs to be a secure unit. But there are 2 other buildings, and we see those as providing different levels of care.

[15:30]

Not secure accommodation, but some of the things that we cannot do at the moment, which is, for instance, there is a law change coming in that provides for where bail is refused that somebody can go into non-secure accommodation. Well, you cannot just pop somebody into one of our children's homes. There are all manner of reasons why that is not a possibility. We have looked at how the same legislation operates in the U.K., where they have ... obviously, they have different providers and they are able to ... the way they use this bit of legislation is that they pay an organisation to guarantee them a non-secure bed, 365, 24 hours a day. Now, nobody provides that service there. Therefore we have to, within our state, build that into it. That is one of the sufficiency needs we are

looking at, but there are many others. There are many other forms of care where you might currently ask for a secure order, but there may be non-secure means of achieving that same outcome. That plan is looking at that whole range of potential care. We are not developing a specific therapeutic home, but we are going to have a therapeutic offer for all our children, in fact. One of the buildings there will basically be incorporating that service. If needs be, there may be needs for some children during that time to be accommodated there, but it is not on the same basis as the previous thought, which was that you have a home, you have 3 children in it, and, in effect, you just offer the service to those 3 children.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I think you have actually got the questions to ask.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

I have ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

So within that, you asked about the plan and sufficiency, and that is where we are going. A plan of this type has never been produced before. It is both about the properties, the children, the children we would like to see flowing. Have we got sufficient children? We have got 2 other premises that we are looking at the moment. One, work is due to commence in the beginning of 2025. It is an existing government property that is unused. It is a large, large house. There is room for basically a manager's apartment, and there is a lot of room for 3 children. That has been sitting empty for many years. There is another set of properties we are looking for that could provide 2 units, each looking after 3 children, and manager's accommodation above it. That has been sitting empty for even longer. Rather than looking for buying property, we have been out and looked at what is in the estate and we have found suitable buildings. They need work, but we are not looking at buying further buildings.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Thank you.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Sorry, it is probably long.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Once you have got your process in place, does it get reviewed or does ... how often does it get reviewed?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Let us get the plan completed first, but it will need reviewing on a constant basis because you are going to have to re-evaluate fairly frequently the number of children coming through the system, because now we are trying to predict what might happen through the next 5 years.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

When you stand now, what would be the period of time that you feel should be acceptable to review the process once it is in place? I know you did say 3-monthly ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

I am going to ask Donna, who is ... Donna, can ...

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, so we have got the reform, the improvement programme, so that board will meet monthly. That will oversee the implementation of the plan and keep reviewing the plan. Underneath that, we have got one of the subgroups of corporate parenting, which is the home and housing subgroup, which is looking at individual sufficiency for young people. So children in care that are coming through the system that need to move to independence as care leavers, we have set up a new sufficiency workstream. That happens every Friday in the service in-house that is feeding that. From now, for ever, there will be a constant state of review about understanding what sufficiency needs are all the time for children and young people. We will plan for the future for them consistently. Then that will get overseen by the bigger board that will keep making sure that the plan for the estate is on track and that the homes are the right homes and that we are reviewing them regularly. So it will be part of a whole big system that is a constant effort of review really.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Minister, I noted that you have already mentioned in your earlier answer, about the therapeutical children's home project.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

I was just going to ask you, in terms of money, how much money was spent on the project before it was cancelled?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Well, thankfully, not a great deal. I know it is a few pounds under £14,000.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.: ‘

Just over £13,000.

The Minister for Children and Families:

£13,290. Do I think that is a total loss? In a way, it might have cost us more to do a review to find out why we should not go down that road. The fact that it cost us £14,000, I do not think it is totally wasted.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Thank you for your answer. If I was to talk about the funding, in 2023 there was an additional funding of £6.5 million and is predicting for 2026 an additional £1.7 million, additional to that. How much of that funding do you think is going into creating a sustainable future structure for that service?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Spending against that budget of £6.55, we expect to have spent around £4.5 ... it was £4.5, was it, in 2023?

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

2023 and £5 million in 2024.

The Minister for Children and Families:

And £5 million in 2024. Now perhaps one good thing out of it, the £1.7 that you see there, which was actually for the 2 new homes, that actually came in at £1.3 million, so there was a £400,000 saving, in effect. Going forward, that will be down as £1.3 million and not £1.7 million. That is actually for the running of those 2 homes. But we are progressing. Those funds are already providing the building blocks for our strategy.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Thank you for your answer. Can you please provide an update on the forward plan for the Corporate Parenting Board in 2024, maybe more specifically around its focus?

The Minister for Children and Families:

The focus will be on ... as I said before, we have set up subgroups. There are 4 subgroups: educational and personal development; creating safer, loving and stable homes; health and well-being; included and respected. Those are the themes on which the subgroups have been formed, and I think 2 of those are already meeting, is that right?

Director, Children's Services:

Yes.

The Minister for Children and Families:

The further 2 will be very shortly. But if you think we have only ... we have changed the way the Corporate Parenting Board operates literally in the last few months. Can I give you further ... do you want further information?

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

I mean around the focus. I am happy around the focus, unless you want to speak any further.

The Minister for Children and Families:

No, we will come back to you as that develops.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Thank you, but I was going to carry on and build on top of that. If you could describe whether there has been any change on the direction of the Corporate Parenting Board and the forward plan since the change of the Government at the end of last year, a change of direction?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think the change of direction really is, in a way, we have covered the way in which we are changing the direction because the Corporate Parenting Board just did not seem to be producing any results or anything constructive coming out of it. As I say, the first thing was actually to go and see how other Corporate Parenting Boards operated. Out of that has come the fact that we are working in subgroups and themes and there will be ... as the subgroups report back to us, we will be able to see proper progress.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

It is substantial changes, would you say?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, really substantial. It was commented on by someone on the inspection but also one of the members commented at the end that they really felt now, that having been to previous ... they really felt that they could see that there were going to be outcomes now.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Positive changes.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Positive change, yes.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

That is great, thank you. Keeping with the Corporate Parenting Board, how many members of the Corporate Parenting Board have undertaken relevant training for their role?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Everybody on the board is trained.

Director, Children's Services:

Do you want me to go?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Director, Children's Services:

I think the last Corporate Parenting Board, before the change in administration, there was a lot of focus on getting that board up and running and engaged. There was some mediation and work with the advocacy services to try and get it up and running. I think the focus now has been about moving into the next step and making it a bit more purposeful in terms of where its direction of travel is. So the creation of those 4 themes means that you are more able to get more focus around the things that are really important for children and young people. The board has met together and they have had some external facilitation around the training about what everyone's role is, all of the board members. I think, apart from one, were in the summer, in June I think - May or June - that took place to train them to be clear about what corporate parenting is, what everyone's responsibilities are. Then underneath that, there has been work with all the arm's-length bodies. We brought them in together to talk about what the Corporate Parenting Board is, what their responsibilities are in law, in the new Children's Law. That work has taken place over the last 3 months, really. Everyone has been trained in that space. Everyone has had some time to talk collaboratively, develop the plan and the new themes. The board has all been part of that, the members. Now we have got these 4 themes and the subgroups that will work to the board's forward plan. All of those 4 groups have started to now build a bit of an action plan about what the priorities are. The board said home and housing is really important, so they want that to be ... that subgroup is up and running, and they start to do the planning and the work to get the things in place that help to make the difference for those children. The included and respected subgroup is up and running and work is taking place about how we are going to engage children and young people and get them to have a voice. The work

plan for that has been built already for this year and different activities taking place, whether it is supporting the care leavers offer or the work around ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

Children in Care Council ...

Director, Children's Services:

... the Bright Spots survey creating ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

... which we had brought in to because ...

Director, Children's Service:

... the Children in Care Council.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, because the Children in Care Council has been sort of languishing and nothing ... and just not ... so we have brought that into this process. Already ...

Director, Children's Service:

Yes, it is up and running.

The Minister for Children and Families:

... there is active work now to get that up and running. So from languishing for the best part of a year, in the revamping of this now it is assigned to one of the subgroups, and somebody is actually working on it.

[15:45]

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Thank you. I think the panel is happy with that answer. Can you please tell us about the work between the chief officer of C.Y.P.E.S. and the States of Jersey Police to develop a data dashboard for the use of the Corporate Parenting Board.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Would you like to, Rob?

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

I will introduce, but then I am actually going to hand over to the Director of Children's Services who has done most of the work. We have been working, myself and the chief of police, for quite some time to understand how we better get underneath some of our challenges around children who might be at risk of exploitation and where that is specifically linked to missing activity. The police already had a helpful dashboard that is shared with us as part of multi-agency working around the activity. When we then had the inspection in May, that gave a real focus that much more was needed. We needed more in-depth analysis as to what was driving that missing activity and a different way of working between our department and the police specifically. That has really then informed how the day-to-day work will be happening and then subsequently how we monitor data through the dashboard and through our day-to-day information sharing, which Donna has been very much driving and leading on.

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, so we have created a daily missing meeting now. We have set a strategic subgroup for missing and exploitation that includes all of the relevant parties, partners that you would want there, the police, social care, Youth Service, all of the different agencies, and the daily missing meeting that has been created is now starting to look at every child that goes missing every day and to start to get underneath. So understanding about what that is about, where that is happening. Is there something we need to do to disrupt that, what is going on? If it is a location or a place that children are going to. So there is a big piece of work from that. That feeds a missing report, which gives us the data, and starting to look at themes and trends that helps us to understand about what that means for children in terms of exploitation and risk. Those sorts of things starts us to be a little bit more intelligent around some of that. Then that dashboard, our daily missing that we have got working with the police, we have worked with them now to start to create a bigger dashboard that will come to the Corporate Parenting Board, which will start to cover a lot more things than just missing as well. So the Corporate Parenting Board will start to have a better line of sight about what is going on for children.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

What about the data collection? Do you feel you are able to collect better data?

Director, Children's Services:

I think it is getting better. Yes, I think it is improving. We have still got work to do to make that really join up as well as you want it to, but we are certainly sharing information properly with the police. We have their missing information.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

No evidence yet at this stage if you actually are able to gather better data?

Director, Children's Services:

Yes.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

You would assume ...

Director, Children's Services:

Yes we are.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

You have?

Director, Children's Services:

We have got much more confidence that we understand the children that are missing, how long they are missing for, where they are, where we think they are finding them, that is much better. But still work to make practice where we want it to be.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

What about in terms of responsibility for the dashboard? Who will be holding or who holds main responsibility for that?

Director, Children's Services:

So each part of the organisation, like police, have got their own missing dashboard and their own missing data. Children's Social Care have got theirs. We bring that together to have a shared understanding. So then we have got the shared information. I think we have got more work to do in using that in a more intelligent way to really make sure that we understand the whole picture.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

So there are 2 primary data controllers, between myself and the chief of police, so we have a very agreed process around information sharing in relation to that.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

That is really good, thank you. The Minister mentioned earlier on about the different subgroups. Would you be in a position to tell me how many of those subgroups sit on that table? With regards to your subgroup, right?

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

For the corporate parenting?

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Yes. There are a few seats around the table so would you be able to name which are those bodies?

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

In terms of members of the Corporate Parenting Board?

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

No, in terms of how many subgroups are there and what is their focus?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Well, there are 4 subgroups.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

It is around themes.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, so, creating safer, loving, and stable homes is up and running, is it not?

Director, Children's Services:

Yes.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Then, I am trying to think what ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Health and well-being.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Education and personal development is up and running. The other 2 are in the process of ...

Director, Children's Services:

Right, can I just ...? Are you are happy with me saying this?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Director, Children's Services:

Included and respected is up and running, because that is the one we have got the Children in Care Council sitting in. That is the one about participation, so that is the one that you have had the oversight about the Christmas cards. And the loving homes one, which is all about care for children, foster care and residential care. So the health and well-being one is not up and running. We are just getting them set up now so we have been putting them in place incrementally. Health and well-being and the education of personal development are just being organised to take place. I think they are due in November, December time, if I think rightly.

The Minister for Children and Families:

If I give an indication, it was only on 1st August that we actually went to the Corporate Parenting Board and explained to them how we were going to ... what the future was. This is all quite new but nevertheless we have 2 of the 4 up and running and actually producing results. Children in Care Council is really moving forward now. I am quite pleased with where we have got to in such a short time.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

A lot of my questions have kind of already been answered in the previous question but I am really interested in the included and respected piece that is going on because one of the questions was how care-experienced children are participating with the Corporate Parenting Board and the subgroups. If you want to tell me how that is working that would be really helpful.

The Minister for Children and Families:

That will be through the Children in Care Council, and that is why I was disappointed that progress was not being made in that area and that we have brought that really back into our fold to get ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So how is the Children in Care Council being established and supported and able to hear the voice of children?

Director, Children's Services:

It has been obviously part of a commissioned-out contract grant that it was being dealt with by an agency. We brought it in-house last month, so it has only been back with the director of participation across C.Y.P.E.S. for a month, and we have started straight away to mobilise a plan. So the subgroup has met. That includes our advocacy service, and social work managers, the participation director, associate director, myself; so a large group of people all wrapping around. We have got a plan over the next 8 weeks to bring young people in. We have got some sessions booked this month with young people over pizza, and some other sessions booked to start to gain their views and their

wishes, and start to build a plan with them. So 3 sessions have been booked with them in the coming weeks to do that. Part of that will be about consulting about the care leaver's offer, and what they think about the care leaver's offer, because that is a piece of work that has been waiting to be concluded for a while. There is another piece of work where earlier in the year, C.Y.P.E.S. undertook a survey ... or last year undertook a survey of all of our care-experienced children and young people, asking them would they be part of giving us feedback through the Bright Spots survey, an external company that seeks children's wishes and feelings. That work has been pulled together in the last weeks since it has been back from Bright Spots. Over the next 8 weeks, we will be consulting those young people to get a little bit more of a feeling of following up and following through on what they have told us.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

How many children have you got off-Island?

Director, Children's Services:

What, today?

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes, in placements.

Director, Children's Services:

Thirteen, I think.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So how do you engage the voices of the children off-Island?

Director, Children's Services:

They are part of the plan to look at how we are going to do that. So there has been some discussions about whether we run something in the U.K. that would help to help those young people.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Are they all in the same place?

Director, Children's Services:

No, they are not. So it will be very difficult because they are all over the country, and some of them will be with families and some of them will be in residential care. But they are certainly part of the plan about how we are going to engage them in being part of it. There might be some online things that we will do to help to try to get their views. It may be that we might combine some things with

when they come back to the Island to visit. Some children do come home and still have connections to their families.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Good. Okay, thank you for that one. Just moving on to the care leavers' offer, because you mentioned that before. I think we have asked questions about it before, but can you just describe the work that is underway to develop the care leavers' offer, guidance and the operational framework that sits alongside it?

Director, Children's Services:

Do you want me to pick up on it, Minister?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I do not mind but you are ... yes.

Director, Children's Services:

The operational guidance has been reviewed by managers already. That is a bit of how managers apply it. I think that work has taken place. The care leavers' offer was a piece of work that was going to be done by our advocacy service. That has not really come to a conclusion, which is part of why we have said that needs to come into the Children in Care Council now. The review of the offer will be part of the 3 sessions we are doing with young people to bring them in to sit with them. The care leavers' offer will be one of the things they review in there. There is a survey going out to young people as well. Some of it is about trying to go through things like the advocacy service and other parts of the system that have contact with young people. They will be able to get their views through that route. Then the review will take place over the coming weeks. Then it is due to go back to the Corporate Parenting Board by 4th December for a final: "This is the outcome. This is what we think it should look like", and for a sign-off by the board.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Can you tell us precisely, then, what is offered to care leavers by the Government at the moment?

Director, Children's Services:

A lot. It is an extensive offer.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Are you planning to change that in the future, Minister?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Only within the terms of this review. What comes out of this review will be an offer, which I think is substantially better than that which is offered in the U.K. Obviously we will put that to the Children in Care Council, although that is in its infancy, for review. But I cannot believe that it will not be well received.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is it going to be better than what is currently offered?

Director, Children's Services:

Probably. I think probably the setting-up home allowance is not as high as what we think it should be, if you look at it comparatively to the U.K., and there probably is a need to benchmark that. So we have asked for some benchmarking work to happen to have a look because I think it probably should be higher. But the rest of the offer is pretty good and probably better than you see in most places.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

What support is available for physical health and mental health support?

Director, Children's Services:

A lot. You have got young people having access to dental, to health care, to mental health, to counselling, to coaching, to therapy, to private support.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Again, if it is prioritised, is there a particular pathway into those services for care leavers or are they just put on the waiting list like everybody else?

Director, Children's Services:

Into adult mental health are you talking about?

Deputy H.M. Miles:

No, into the different pathways to the mental health and physical health support. Are they prioritised into those ... is there a pathway for care leavers?

Director, Children's Services:

No.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

So they will go into the general stratification process for Adult Services. So they will be assessed based on the referral presentation. That will be how they will be managed in the adult pathway.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I was just going to say, we have had feedback from care leavers saying that they thought they were entitled to something and then they are confused and it does not happen. So is it going to be made much more clear what they are entitled to?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes. I think that is part of the review, is that.

Director, Children's Services:

Part of the work is to get that better on to the website, that it will be clear about young people's entitlement. But I do think you have to be realistic about what the offer is in terms of the access to health care or whatever that would be for any young person or any person on the Island.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

I would add that where you might get confusion is whether people do or do not meet the eligibility. So there is a formal process there and that is particularly what we want our advocacy provider to support those young people, those care leavers specifically, where they are then able to apply for an individual review and where the chief officer can have discretion around whether or not we can offer the full suite. We have done that on a number of occasions where we have had requests come through. Some of them have been partial but there is a process around, how we manage that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Have you picked up any problems with care leavers who do not have housing qualifications?

[16:00]

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Yes.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, and something that I think we hope to resolve. Myself and Rob spent many months on one particular case and eventually those qualifications were granted, but it was not an easy process and I would not want that to be repeated with another young person.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

If a child is placed off-Island, does the period of residence that they spend off the Island continue to accrue with their housing qualifications?

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

My understanding is that they are now, under the legislation, meant to have the same level of entitlement. The challenge is not so much now around children wanting to return to Jersey; the challenge really relates to children when they come into care at a certain point in time and then they do not have the 10-year period of being here and then they are needing to seek housing qualification.

The Minister for Children and Families:

That is where the issue is.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

They are the young people that ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

That is where the issue is.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

That is where the issue is.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

But if you are placed off-Island.

The Minister for Children and Families:

No, I think you would maintain your ...

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

You maintain your status.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

You maintain it ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, you maintain.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

... so you continue to accrue as if you are a Jersey resident.

The Minister for Children and Families:

But that is not a problem; it is the child who finds themselves - and there are circumstances - in Jersey ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Are you looking at any changes to the Control of Housing and Work Law then, to bring care leavers into the mix?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Well, care leavers should be a special case.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Yes.

The Minister for Children and Families:

They should be a special case already and we are working with the Minister to try and resolve this because I do not think the law needs changing ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

It just needs applying.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes. But we met a number of barriers, did we not?

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Yes.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think I am being fairly diplomatic.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

We have also heard about difficulties that care leavers have around exemption from Parish rates, and I think the last time we spoke to you, you were going to take it to Comité des Connétables to have a discussion.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, this is an interesting one. Right. What has transpired is that - and we discussed this at the Corporate Parenting Board and it has sort of been accepted - that there is an element within the money received by care leavers that already is for the Parish rates. It is already included. Therefore, exempting you from something that you are already being paid for is probably not the pathway that we can go down. I am only aware of 2 cases last year where care leavers were unable to pay the rates. Even though they were not in my Parish, I successfully resolved both of those. It is difficult for the Parish, from their welfare funds, to make a payment for this because there is specifically in the trust from which we pay that money a clause that says if the amount is already provided for by Social Security, we cannot make a payment.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay.

The Minister for Children and Families:

But there are other funds.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I guess the question is, will that be made clear when the care leavers' offer is published?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think it has to be, yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Just to put that one to bed.

The Minister for Children and Families:

But what I am trying to get from myself and Karen Shenton-Stone, who is on the Corporate Parenting Board ... we are trying to get something from the Constables that in effect says that should they have a care leaver who comes to them they will be treated as, in effect, a special case. That is what happens in the vast majority of Parishes already.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, that is fine. Thank you. I think you did say, but just to recap, the care leavers' offer guidance documents, you are coming to the end of the review, have done the consultation, and by the beginning of next year the guidance documents, the operational frameworks will be ready, published and cooking on gas, sort of thing.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, thank you. I am just going to leave care leavers now and turn to the Youth Service, in the responsibility of the Assistant Minister.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Malcolm's specialist subject.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

You might be disappointed with the question, you never know.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

You never know.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

In the Budget documents, we have noted that the Youth Parliament that was run by the Youth Service is now moving to the States Greffe.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Correct.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Could you just tell us some more about that decision, please?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, we met earlier this year and decided that the best place for ... best post to sit would be with the Greffe, not least because it is a wider piece of work. As well as the Youth Parliament, it gets into political engagement and political education for young people. So it was felt that although the Youth Service had done a really good job on it, part of it was team building for young people, and finding themselves in Youth Service buildings, whereas actually where they need to be to get that political background is here and other places where they are going to get more political interaction. So, what we have done is, it has moved over to the Greffe. A normal recruitment process was underway before the recruitment freeze came into place - but either way, this would still be front line - and a new person starts on 4th November. As well as that, in tandem, over summer the Greffe have been conducting a survey to find out what young people want to get out of this programme and how their energies can be best applied. The results of that programme will be being produced and

then we are looking at starting the whole Assembly up again, or the Youth Parliament up again, hopefully beginning of next year.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Was there any consultation at all with young people or anybody else to move it away from the Youth Service into the Greffe?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

It was a decision that was taken by both the Greffe and the Youth Service, but the consultation about how it is going to shape has been done since.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

But there was no consultation with the young people in the existing Youth Parliament about the move?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Not that I am aware of, but hopefully they will see a better experience and a more fulfilling experience than they have had in the past.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Will the Youth Parliament then still have access to all the Youth Service resources and facilities, the Crabbé weekend and the “stuff”?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, there will still be some interplay between what is the new Youth Parliament and the Jersey Youth Service, because it is still where young people are. There will still be those engagement days because that still is really important for team building, but the overall control will come from the Greffe.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, fascinating. Thank you very much.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Pleasure.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Minister, can you describe the top 3 things that the Government of Jersey is doing to ensure that children in Jersey have a decent standard of living?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Right, well, I think one of the things that we have done is that we have introduced school meals; that has had quite a dramatic effect, I would have thought, on children's well-being. Those meals have been very well received. Every time I go to school, and obviously I am not the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, but I visited one the other day, and the headteacher was extremely happy with the quality of the food and how much the children were enjoying it. I have been offered a meal there, so I think I will be going soon.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Every day.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Only one.

The Connétable of Grouville:

You will have to declare it.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, I will. The other thing is looking at improved housing conditions. Children need to live in an appropriate home, and the new Rented Dwelling Licensing Scheme that the Minister for Housing has introduced is a first step towards ensuring that. I hope that also, with the fairly large number of family homes that will be built in the next few years, that we will see ... because I think 45 per cent of those will be social housing. They will be exactly the same quality as those that are for sale, so I think we will see some nice family homes coming on to the market, that really do provide children - perhaps more vulnerable children - with a really nice home. Finally, we are looking at the transition to the living wage, which I think is quite a positive step toward reducing poverty. There will be households where parents are living on the minimum wage at the moment, and moving to the living wage I think will have a very positive impact financially on those families.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you for that, those 3 things. My next question was about providing specific examples, but I think you have already said that.

The Minister for Children and Families:

One I missed - along the food thing - is the co-working with the Salvation Army, so it will no longer be a food bank, but it will be the food pantry, which will provide a much better service. I think a small

payment per week will give people access to a much better range of products. So that is something we are doing in conjunction ... I think that is well worth mentioning, that one.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thank you. The recently published strategy by the Children's Commissioner has included 6 areas of focus; one of these is children experiencing poverty. A survey that they conducted has collected evidence that there are children in Jersey who are worried about poverty and the cost of living. Minister, what is your reaction and your approach about this concern of young people in Jersey in 2024?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I can understand that. Prices have risen quite considerably over the last 2 years. I am closer to that probably as a Constable because I really do see it, and I know families within my own Parish where it will be quite apparent to the children that there has been a change and that their parents are struggling. What can we do about it? Well, we have gone over some of the things we are doing; I think there needs to be reassurance for those children that there are measures coming in place. I think some of that can be done through the Youth Service - those who attend the youth clubs throughout the Island - and through the schools as well. I do not know if we have got anything specific that we plan to do ... I would not want children to be worrying about that, but they will be seeing it, and we have to get reassurance to them that we can eliminate that.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

I would just add to that, that through the work of the associate director for participation and engagement, a lot of that feedback has come through the school council. You will probably be aware of the number of "cash notes"; that children wrote on those notes what their concerns are. Much of that relates to the cost of living. So the chief executive for the Government has tasked all departments across the government to outline what they are doing in response to that thematic concern. Each chief officer has provided their commitment, and through that school council the director will engage feedback into the children. Because, as the Minister says, we need to provide reassurance that we are listening and these are some of the things that we are looking at doing to try and help and support. That is the mechanism that we are adopting with that; it is good to see that that voice of the child is getting such prominent focus across the whole of the Government, not just within our department.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I am very aware of this, and I can share something that I am involved with personally. It does relate to the Parish, but it is because of my involvement as a Minister for Children and Families. I will not name the other people in it, but we are setting up a group specifically to help families in hardship in the Parish. It is very much based on the fact that we know that there are children in these families, and so I would hope that other people follow that as well.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That is in your Parish?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Thank you.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Would you mind if I just ask a bit further in terms of how to support those children? I believe the Minister mentioned that through youth work sessions. My understanding is that some of those children - the most vulnerable ones - do not attend the Youth Service's activities, often maybe because the parents are working all hours and they have to stay at home looking after little ones or whatever the reasons; they tend to be isolated. So, outside trying to reach those children, outside the Youth Service, where else would you be planning to pick them up?

[16:15]

The Minister for Children and Families:

Well, I suppose the schools are ... we do have outreach workers as well, who are making contact with those children who do not attend our Youth Services. But the schools would be the next ...

Director, Children's Services:

Our Children and Families Hub would be offering a lot of support to families that are not even in social care that are ...

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

It is important for the general public to hear where they can access those supports. As I mentioned, some of them, they will not attend certain venues where the support is available, but if they are aware, they can look out for that to ask for help.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Absolutely.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Thank you.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, my next question I think we can send to you as a written question, so I am wondering, Mark, if you could go on to number 19?

The Connétable of Grouville:

The Children's Commissioner's last annual report recommended keeping the legislation policy and services relating to secure accommodation orders under review. Can you describe the Government's current position on secure accommodation orders?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think secure accommodation orders is something that we are using less of; there are still instances where that is the only option that we have available. I think that is where our review of Greenfields and those buildings - which we are emptying, which sit alongside Greenfields - probably comes into this. This is in its infancy, but we are looking at the alternatives and how we would offer those alternatives to secure accommodation. If you look to the U.K. and other countries, there are alternatives which may involve therapeutic help, counselling ... and this is where I said we would probably, within that, have a specialist centre, and that is not the same as the therapeutic centre. It is a different concept, in a way; it would outreach to more children. You would hope, within time, that you might reach a situation where you do not have to have a secure accommodation and that the only time you would have that is where somebody is placed in custody as a sentence from the court. I think there will always be a case where that occurs. When I visited the Isle of Man, they had had very few secure orders in the last few years ... none at all, in fact, in the 2 years before we visited. But they still had, on both occasions, 2 young people in custody. Those were for very serious offences where you would expect that to be the case.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Do you intend to take any specific action or propose legislative changes which impact the secure accommodation of children in Jersey?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think from what we have said that, ultimately, we have to do that because at the moment there is one option. Therefore, if you want to have other options, we are going to have to change the

legislation. In some cases, the courts will need to be able to also offer those options, where they are offering a custodial sentence at the moment. There might be other forms of, let us say, less secure custody that could be made available.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Can you provide an overview for the panel of the current policy and services relating to secure accommodation for children and young people?

Director, Children's Services:

Shall I get that, Minister?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes. It is a tough one.

Director, Children's Services:

It is defined in legislation - the secure accommodation order - so it comes under the legislative Act that you have got around children. I would say that the option of secure is something that is driven by a child's needs. If you have got a serious safeguarding concern and you cannot, through any other means, make that child safe - and the only way to make them safe sometimes is to take away their liberty - that would be what you would need to do if it means making them safe. You have always got to balance that against their rights and entitlements. It is the same conversation we have all the time with the Children's Commissioner; how do we get that right? It is really hard because you would never want to take away a child's liberty unnecessarily; it is a really important thing. It would only be done with the full endorsement of the court. You would have a judge, you would have a guardian, you would have a whole range of people that were all part of that decision-making and that evidence base. It is really well overseen by a whole string of legislative framework that requires you to do lots of things to make that decision, and it is only ever given for a really short period of time in law. The judge might say: "You can have 6 weeks" or 4 weeks - whatever they determine - and then it is really carefully reviewed all of the time to try to find the earliest point you can stop that, while keeping a child safe. There will always be times when, despite everything we want to try and do, we cannot keep a child safe without keeping them in and stopping what is happening to them for a little while; and then we do the work to try and help them come out and move on from that.

The Connétable of Grouville:

We have already mentioned Greenfields today, Minister; we thank you for that update. The Government was budgeting in 2022 for a redesign of Greenfields - we have already mentioned that - but this has been subsequently removed from plans. Do you think the Greenfields secure accommodation unit needs a redesign?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think it does; I have said this many times. It was built in a different era; it was probably out of date at the point it was completed.

The Connétable of Grouville:

When it was opened, yes.

The Minister for Children and Families:

But believe me, we are not the only people who ... if you go to the one in the Isle of Man, which I think might have been completed 2 years later ... they built it for the same purpose, but they are fortunate in that the design of the building lent itself to be able to be adapted, whereas ours does not. Ours needs a redesign. Now, I say that because I think if you were to suggest building an alternative in another part of the Island, you would probably have difficulty getting planning permission. That has been, so far, an issue that we have had with other plans, and so therefore, you looked at redesigning what is there. As I say, at least 50 per cent of the building, I think, could be transformed for non-secure use. If, as you move to a point where it is really for court-imposed custody for a criminal offence, then you really have got to make some major changes to the rest of the building.

The Connétable of Grouville:

We will catch up with you on Wednesday on this.

The Minister for Children and Families:

To be honest, it is part of our property strategy and we are in the beginning of that journey at the moment.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I was just going to ask, have you got any plans on when these changes might happen, when it is reviewed?

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

It is part of the sufficiency plan.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We have dates in the sufficiency plan. As soon as we can, we will share that with you. At the moment, it is a draft, and I would not like to share it at the moment, because there will be changes.

As I say, in preparation for that, we are vacating the 2 buildings that are alongside Greenfields, because they will be part of those plans.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Just to reassure the panel, that does not mean that we continue to invest in Greenfields. We spent a lot of money on Greenfields as part of the improvement notice and the changes that were needed under the last Government and now, under this Government, we have continued with those changes and those improvements. So the change here is around a different way of using the building, not the ongoing “having to use the building as it is now”. That is a separate capital funding that we have.

The Connétable of Grouville:

I was very fortunate to accompany the Minister on our visit to the Isle of Man facility, which I thank you for. But has there been any follow-up to that visit after the review of facilities there?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, there has, because what we learned from the Isle of Man is part of the plan we are putting together; so we did learn, yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is there any thought about bringing an agency similar to the one in the Isle of Man to come in to run it, or is that a little bit early in the thinking?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think it is probably early to ... it is certainly something we have talked about, because ... I have got to say, they do an extremely good job there and you can see their 10 years in the Isle of Man have made a very big difference to the way that their unit operates. There are things that they do that I would like to incorporate, and we certainly have ... it is one of the considerations.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you.

The Connétable of Grouville:

How does the current law impacting secure accommodation orders align with the forthcoming Youth Justice Strategy?

The Minister for Children and Families:

It is still there. As I say, the fact is that if we want to offer alternatives, we have to make those changes within the Youth Strategy. We have to have those non-secure options within that. I am

not sure that the work that has been done so far actually includes some of the things that we would like to be in there, so that is something that I have asked to look at.

The Connétable of Grouville:

My next question is: what sight have you had of the forthcoming Youth Justice Strategy?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I have seen a draft, but I think there are changes that we will want to make.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you, Minister.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. We are nearly finishing, so if we can send you some questions in writing, if that would be okay. Maybe if I could just ask one quick question, which is just about the play policy. At the panel's last hearing, you advised that the play policy was being worked on and would be provided to the panel when possible. Please could you confirm the projected date for that work?

The Minister for Children and Families:

It is interesting; what we have is a play policy and we keep on being told we have got a play strategy which in effect we do not have. We do have that policy document, but it is still in draft form, is it not? Because I have had copies of it. But when could we make that available to the ...

Director, Children's Services:

I think it is probably ... I have not been involved in the play strategy ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

Well, it is the play policy, but it sits within 3 departments.

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

It does.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes. It is not just ours. It was quite clear within the policy - you have got the correct page there - that it sits across ... where is it?

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

Infrastructure and Environment.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Infrastructure and Environment, Children and Families, and the third one is ...

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

I am not sure.

The Minister for Children and Families:

It is in here somewhere.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

No, I think it might be across 2.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Who leads on this, then?

Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:

It is joint work.

The Minister for Children and Families:

It is joint work. I think we have to incorporate it into our Children's Plan, along with other things that are joint work, in order to progress it. Because there are play areas that are coming forward as part of the new housing developments; Infrastructure are responsible for all the government play areas, so we do not have ownership of any of those play areas, but obviously we have an interest in ensuring that there are sufficient play areas for children and that what is delivered is what children actually require. So if I go to some large developments in the west of the Island ... the other day I met with the developers and the builder of the primary school, and we are working with the children as to what they wish to see as part of that. For the slightly older children, we will be doing the same exercise with the youth club in that area, and we need to see that across the Island. We need, as part of our Children, Young People and Families Plan, to have it within that, but delivery by a number of areas. I thought it was 3, but it could just be us and Infrastructure, and I have asked to have a meeting with the Minister for Infrastructure discuss that.

[16:30]

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That is good. I think this is one of the things that children have raised themselves, that they care about a lot, is it not?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, it is. I said the other day - and I do not know where I was - that the children in the primary school have got a very good idea of what they want. But as you move into the older age group, it is less clear what they would like delivered.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Somewhere to go out, in the dark.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Well yes, we did have “building dens” and ... yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes. There is a nice area in St. Martin’s for teenagers to hang out.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, very nice.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, we have come to the end of our time.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Have we?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes we have.

The Minister for Children and Families:

It has gone quickly .

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

If we can send you some written questions, that would be good because we still had some questions. Thank you very much. We will just bring the meeting to a close.

[16:31]