



Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Children and Families

Wednesday, 29th January 2025

Panel:

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

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville (Vice Chair)

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade

Witnesses:

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

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

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

Mr. D. Bowring, Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-Being

Mr. A. Andrew Heaven, Assistant Director of Policy

[14:00]

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

Welcome to this quarterly hearing of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. Today is 29th January. I would like to draw everyone's attention to the following. The 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. If we begin with introductions now. I am Deputy Catherine Curtis, chair of the panel.

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville (Vice Chair):

Connétable Mark Labey of the Parish of Grouville. I am vice chair.

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade:

Deputy Helen Miles, member of the panel.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Richard Vibert, Minister for Children and Families.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Deputy Malcolm Ferey, Assistant Minister for Children and Families.

Director of Children's Services:

Donna Marriott, Director of Children's Services.

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-Being:

Darren Bowring, Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-Being.

Assistant Director of Policy:

I am Andrew Heaven, Assistant Director of Policy.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thanks everyone. Unfortunately, Deputy Porée cannot be with us today. I will start with the questions. My first question is actually about the 2023 Jersey Care Commission inspection report on C.A.M.H.S. (Children and Adult Mental Health Services) and the recommendations from that report. There were 2 remaining recommendations from the C. and A.G (Comptroller and Auditor General) review as well. So my question on that is: Minister, can you advise the panel what progress has been made in implementing these recommendations?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Right. Well, I will ask Donna.

Director of Children's Services:

Which recommendations were they again, sorry? Are they the same ones about C.A.M.H.S?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

The C.A.M.H.S. ones.

The Minister for Children and Families:

No, it is Darren.

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-Being:

Okay. Yes, so in terms of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Jersey Care Commission inspection report was published in February last year, there were 12 recommendations. C.A.M.H.S. was inspected again by the College and the Care Commission on 27th and 28th November last year. We are expecting the new report this February. All 12 improvements from last time, I think it was agreed, have been implemented. That includes updating and ratifying the M.O.U. (Memorandum of Understanding) between C.Y.P.E.S (Children, Young People, Education and Skills) and Health, creating a number of new policies, clarifying and updating the complaints procedure and making it straightforward and easy to access for children and young people. We supported the application for the shared prescribing of A.D.H.D. (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) medicine and the development of shared prescribing guidelines, which we are still keen to pursue. I understand the Royal College and the Care Commission are still keen that there is some outcome to that. Then there was further work alongside introducing a protocol with the police, improvements to our training, monitoring and supervision compliance and some adaptations to the environment. So all of the recommendations were implemented with ongoing work around the prescribing issue that we are very keen occurs, but is outside of our delivery within C.A.M.H.S., to conclude.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That is a shame. It is a bit blocked there at the moment, I think, is it not? But not by C.A.M.H.S. Just a couple of them I have noted and I just want to check with you. Self-referral for young people, is that okay now?

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

We clarified with the Care Commission that anybody can refer into the Children and Families Hub, where there is a dedicated C.A.M.H.S. nurse in there that can support and the referral process coming through. We also confirmed with the Care Commission as well the number the investment in all the universal services in Jersey that children, young people and families can access to support their mental health, which are freely available and easy to refer to. They were satisfied with the process that we have in place regarding the referral and the ease of access of C.A.M.H.S. services.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So a young person could walk into the families hub?

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

They would be supported to have their referral addressed. It may be that the nurse would then contact the school or the family to get more information and would guide them through it. Yes, that is in place.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

The new location, the lease will end, will it not, on Liberty House until 2026?

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

September next year.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So is there like a timeline, a plan, for that?

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes, there has been lots of work about next steps and about where C.A.M.H.S. goes to. There was a significant amount of work put in place on one environment that has now been costed and is looking difficult. We have since visited a second environment which looks more promising. Architects have been consulted on that, particularly around development of appropriate clinical space, which looks appropriate, and there is some current work happening regarding the potential lease. We seem to have solutions. Obviously, it is difficult to share while that is ongoing, but that is one of the key parts of the C.A.M.H.S. business plan this year to identify an appropriate building for C.A.M.H.S. services from September 2026.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Will that site be in town?

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes, that is the hope.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

My next question is about how much and whether C.A.M.H.S. is working with Youthful Minds and the Youth Parliament to incorporate young people's voices into the service planning? Maybe, Minister, you want to answer that one?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Well, I certainly would hope that we are taking into account the voice of children and the Youth Parliament. Specifically, how that is done ... Darren, have you done any work on it? I am sure we have had some work on that.

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

In real positive news to us, the Royal College of Psychiatrists have an annual conference every October and Jersey C.A.M.H.S. were invited to present alongside with Youthful Minds to talk about the joint work that has been done here together to develop the service and to implement the mental health strategies. That was seen nationally as an example of really good practice. Between our C.A.M.H.S. quality assurance team and young people from Youthful Minds, a presentation took place in London last October to share that. Youthful Minds have been absolutely fundamental to the work that we have been doing in C.A.M.H.S. We have a young person on every single interview panel that we have from Youthful Minds. They have recently been involved again in further advice regarding adaptations to our waiting areas since social care moved out. We engage every month with them in terms of keeping them updated and they also helpfully challenge us at times in terms of developments and practice, so it is a key relationship. Exactly the same as Youth Parliament, they have been very vocal over the quality of mental health support in previous years and we have responded to that at times, and to their submissions previously. They submitted some documents on which we have produced action plans, I think, that came before the Ministers previously. I think this year they have not ... this last year they have moved on to different subjects as opposed to mental health, so we have not had as much engagement over recent times. But we are absolutely keen to continue to involve young people in Jersey in developing the service.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Just a quick supplementary. We have just spoken about potential new premises, Darren. Would that Youthful Minds input be ... I think it is crucial for any choice of new premises?

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Absolutely. It absolutely would be. We have got some learning from the last inspection report because, for example, young people - you will see when it is published - mentioned that there was current issues around the C.A.M.H.S. building, for example, being on the main school route and the bus stop.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes, people see you going and out.

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Well, other young people seeing them going in when they are walking past from school. They did not like the fact that C.A.M.H.S. is on the front of the building. Where we would like probably our name on the front, they were saying they wanted it more discreet and different things. So we have quite a bit of rich information from some of the feedback already. But once we get closer to having

the potential to go, then we would be working with young people to make sure the building is absolutely designed to meet their needs and to their specification.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

What is the current waiting time for the initial C.A.M.H.S. assessment? This is the one that was brought in, was it not, so that people could be seen fairly quickly? What is the waiting time for that at the moment?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I do not know the waiting time, but the referrals are done within - the non-urgent - 26 days.

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes, so quarter 4 last year was one of the quickest. We completed initial assessments of all routine referrals in quarter 4 in 26 days last year. We have a target for our routine referrals for assessments to be completed within 26 days, so obviously quarter 4 last year was very prompt. It was also interesting ... we benchmark our data, we submit it to the N.H.S. (National Health Service) benchmarking report which compares C.A.M.H.S. to other U.K. (United Kingdom) C.A.M.H.S. services, and we were identified in that report as one of the quickest services to complete initial assessments on routine mental health in any C.A.M.H.S. service in the U.K. The median time for C.A.M.H.S. services in the U.K. to offer a first appointment is 5.5 weeks and CAMHS here are completing the assessments in 4. So we are ahead of the game in terms of those services.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, and that is for that initial ...

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

That is for an initial routine assessment. Anything more urgent is obviously all triaged at the front door. So some young people are seen immediately the same day, others within a week as well. So those are done much quicker. This is a data for those routine ones and assessments.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Minister, could you advise the panel whether there is expected to be any restructuring of C.A.M.H.S. in the next year? About where C.A.M.H.S. sits in the Government and so on?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Not that I am aware of, but I had heard a little rumour which I was not happy about and I made that known. Since then I have not heard anything further. Unfortunately, that is as much as I know. But,

certainly from my point of view, we are not going to change the structure or change the department under which C.A.M.H.S. sits and I am quite adamant about that.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

We can expect business as usual?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thank you for that. I think that is my questions for the moment.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Some more questions surrounding a similar topic. Minister, in the C.A.M.H.S. annual report in 2023, in the goals for 2024, it states: "Complete the consultation with unions and staff before moving towards an 8.00 a.m., 8.00 p.m. duty service, 7 days a week. This will provide C.A.M.H.S. emergency response to children and family during these extended hours." Has this now been introduced and, if not, why not?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I will pass to Darren about that. But, as far as I know, we are sort of exceptionally good at covering out of hours.

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes, so we had some delays. Obviously, as we were moving the hours of existing C.A.M.H.S. nursing staff, we had to have some consultation with the unions. That led to some protracted discussions around changes to rotas and terms and conditions around work. That has now been resolved and agreed. From 1st February, C.A.M.H.S. will be moving to 7 days a week. We will have nurses on duty 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., 7 days a week. Then from March, we will extend that so we will be open 7 days a week from 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. It has been delayed and that was delayed by the union because of the consultation process around changing staff but that is now addressed. The other positive news is that Adult Mental Health have advertised and have shortlisted and are currently interviewing for C.A.M.H.S. nurses to work within their out of hours team which will work from 8.00 at night to 8.00 in the morning. Very shortly we should have C.A.M.H.S. nurses present and available 24 hours a day in Jersey, which will be extremely positive.

The Minister for Children and Families:

But we do have an out of hours service now, have we not? Because whenever we have had incidents I am aware that currently somebody is available.

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes, they are currently ... so out of hours currently is overseen by Adult Mental Health, but what we will have now to supplement that is C.A.M.H.S. nurses as part of our offer, which will help triage particularly young people that are in crisis and attend in E.D. (Emergency Department), which will be helpful.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Very positive.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Will they be part of the team or will they be just for young people?

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

This is an extension of our C.A.M.H.S. C.A.M.H.S. have a duty and assessment team, so that C.A.M.H.S. duty and assessment team will work from 8.00 to 8.00, so it will be their full range of business will now work 8.00 to 8.00 and there will be a C.A.M.H.S. nurse then also employed by Adult Mental Health for that out of hours bit as well.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

But to do young people's nursing, not the adult nursing?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Just to do young people, yes.

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes. Should a young person appear at E.D. that reports of an issue or crisis or they be admitted to hospital, there will be a C.A.M.H.S. nurse to be available as part of that support. That should be a positive.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Excellent. Minister, what measures have been taken to reduce waiting times for neurodevelopmental diagnostic assessments?

[14:15]

The Minister for Children and Families:

Good question. I will pass to Darren again.

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

So, as you know, neurodevelopmental assessments has been huge numbers of referrals in recent years. In 2023, we had over 900 referrals. In positive news in 2024, referrals reduced to 491. So we have now seen some reduction as we expected. The post-COVID period where a significant number ... as we have asserted before, it is really positive that children and young people are being identified earlier as having features of neurodiversity and being put forward for assessments because that means we get better understanding of needs and can put support in much earlier, which is obviously much better for young people's mental health and their understanding. We have always seen this as a positive. The huge increase that happened now created a significant backlog. What we have now is we have increased internal capacity, we have recruited more staff, we have trained more staff and we are able to deliver more internal assessments. Last year, for example, we did over 400 assessments and we received 491 referrals so we are getting closer to that amount. What we are still ... the issue we still have is a significant number of referrals of previous years creating some backlog so, again, this year we have invested for 2025 an additional £400,000 of Government Plan money to pay for some private providers, who are providing additional capacity to work through some of the backlog that we have. We currently have a full-time psychiatrist working solely on A.D.H.D. assessments in our service, working entirely on that pathway. We are working through but it remains a real challenge.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is that psychiatrist on Island or are they working remotely?

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

On Island, yes. We have a psychiatrist here from a company called Amino Health, delivering full-time A.D.H.D. and we continue to contract a company called Options Autism, which is a virtual provider that does the online assessments, which obviously gives that ability for some families to be able to do that from their own home which, for some young people and families who are neurodiverse, can be quite helpful.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Just to follow up on that, we have a figure here of 38 weeks' referral time. Do you think that has now been reduced down?

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

No, it increased. For 2024, the wait time increased to 55 weeks, so it has continued to rise. Obviously, the added difficulty is not just the numbers coming in that require an assessment, every young person that is diagnosed then requires support. For example, people diagnosed with A.D.H.D., we know around a third are looking for medication treatment as well. So those then get added to our caseloads, clinicians. We have an increasing caseload of just under 1,950 young people at the moment open to what is a relatively small service and a backlog of referrals, and still a relatively high number of referrals above what our capacity is to deliver. It is all hands to the deck and the clinicians are working really hard with the capacity that we have to address it, but it does remain a real challenge.

The Minister for Children and Families:

In the U.K. it is significantly more than 55 weeks.

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

We are aware that some services are 3 to 5 years and there is real firm access criteria for most N.H.S. services. One of the recommendations from the Royal College of Psychiatrists certainly was that most neurodiverse services within the N.H.S. do have access criteria and for us to consider that over here. At the moment, we accept anybody that is curious, anybody that is looking for an assessment and they are offered one, but the Royal College are suggesting with the continued numbers coming in that as a government service we do need to look to review that to make sure that the children in most need have prompt access.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

How is the relationship with the local G.P.s (general practitioners) then when it comes to that? Do you find that G.P.s will just refer anything just in case or is there an element of robust triage going on with local G.P.s before they get a referral into C.A.M.H.S.?

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

I think it is fairly robust. The majority of our neurodevelopmental referrals are coming from Education. So over 40% of C.A.M.H.S. referrals come from Education. We have found that there is really good understanding of neurodiversity. So people are recognising features and referring people in. We are not seeing inappropriate referrals. There are just situations where, for example, young people might be referred because there is a question whether their focus in school and whether their grades are high enough. They are compared to young people that might be coming in with more significant challenges being able to access school. We have a range of different presentations and it is whether, as a C.A.M.H.S. service with limited capacity, we can offer the full range of assessments for everybody. That is something we are going to need to consult and discuss

further so we do have a service that is fit for purpose and can offer prompt assessments going forward.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Good. The next question is about the Do-IT profiler screening and assessment tool. Have you managed to secure funding for that?

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

We have funding. We are very keen on the Do-IT profiler. The Do-IT profiler is used as a screening tool by several N.H.S. services, including the Welsh Health Service. So what that would mean is that anybody that is referred in for a neurodevelopmental assessment would get a link, an electronic link, to the Do-IT profiler. Both their teaching staff and their families can complete the online assessment. What it does is collates the developmental history. It generates a report and details whether it is appropriate for further clinical assessment in A.D.H.D. or autism, for example, and it also lists a number of interventions that might be helpful for families or schools based on what is listed. We are really keen for everybody to come in and get ... for families and teachers to get access to that because it will generate almost an immediate set of suggestions and response and give us a screening tool. We have funding for it and we have had several discussions. The issue is the implementation from an I.T. (information technology) perspective and we have been told in terms of the projects for modernisation and digital, it is lower down the list of priorities at the moment. So that is what we are waiting for. It is not a funding issue and it is not a service issue, it is part of a huge number of pressures, I guess, that department are under.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is that modernisation and digital within Government? I was going to say Health but you are not associated with Health.

Director of Children's Services:

The whole of Government.

The Connétable of Grouville:

The final question is awareness of neurodiversity in social care. This panel has been concerned for a while about relatively high turnover among social workers, et cetera. Are they getting training in neurodiversity as well, keeping up with that?

Director of Children's Services:

Shall I cover that? I think the social work training will cover a vast array of comprehensive training lists that we will have to do. I do not think neurodiversity will be a required or compulsory piece of

training that they will do. But social workers will work a lot with neurodiversity and I think it would be fair to say we have had a lot more work joining up with C.A.M.H.S. and social care now, certainly since we joined up the directorate. Darren's been working with my leadership team in trying to create a more seamless service with C.A.M.H.S. and children's social workers together, trying to join up children's plans much more. They are much more exposed to C.A.M.H.S. practice and C.A.M.H.S. practitioners. I would say social workers are quite well-skilled and understanding about neurodiversity.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is there any need for them to have the formal qualification around spell or build?

Director of Children's Services:

No, I do not think across the whole scheme you would want that because they need to have, I suppose, their expertise in their area of practice to be able to access the support from the experts that know it and to be able to understand it in a basic way. The same as whether they are looking at exploitation or whether they are looking at neglect or their range of their skill base is quite broad.

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

I guess, of course, as Deputy Miles refers to, it can be quite useful in terms of introductory courses. You are going to hear a bit about the practice model and about how we are trying to work much more interdisciplinary around everybody but we could potentially look going forward about the training offers and what C.A.M.H.S. could provide across the directorate in terms of courses.

Director of Children's Services:

You could but I suppose what we are just currently doing is reviewing the entire social work training plan because there is too much, it is too broad and what they are doing is struggling to carry out all of the training they are being asked to do on top of trying to do their work. At the moment we are just trying to rationalise a programme and prioritise the things that are important, the practice model, the work around neglect, sexual or harmful behaviour, those are some of the things that are critical to the social work assessment. Certainly it is something we could look at in a broader way as we go along but I think we have a bit of work to do now to try to rationalise the programme so we can bring the focus to the areas of practice we really need to develop. We have some areas of practice that we would want to strengthen properly first, but it is something that is obviously quite a big part of their work, so certainly something we could consider.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

In the annual plan of C.A.M.H.S., one of your goals was to consolidate and promote the early intervention offer. Could you tell us about where you are with that and what has been achieved so far?

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes, so C.A.M.H.S. early intervention service has been fully staffed now over the last 12 months. It is led by Tina Hesse as a dedicated service manager, who some of you will be aware of. We have C.A.M.H.S. early intervention practitioners linked to each cluster of schools, so they are working hard to improve relationships and consultations in schools. They are delivering a number of courses for young people and for parents. They are offering grief therapy for children and young people that require it. There has been a number of really good initiatives particularly, that was picked up by inspectors at the last inspection. We have a nature-based therapist working for that service who has been taking young people out and doing some therapeutic work on beaches and all of the outside space in Jersey, which the inspectors thought was really positive. That is what we have been trying to do, I guess, in C.A.M.H.S. as we have grown the service, is to try to increase that menu of therapeutic offers away from what was originally some of the more traditional approaches like C.B.T. (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) and E.M.D.R. (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing) to create more of a difference. That is certainly what Tina's service comes with. It comes with that wider range of offer of more creative type approaches that engage a much wider group of children. I think it has been successful. I guess one of the purposes of having an early intervention team was to impact on a much more preventative level and reduce some of the levels of referrals. We have seen a little drop in referrals over the last 12 months so hopefully that is beginning to show. But as we move on, that will be the proof, because that is what we want to see that team impacting and then we are having less referrals to the more specialist mental health clinicians that we have.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Again, you have the crossover with your Building a Safer Community strategy as well there, so the pieces are sort of coming together, are not they? What about the parent-infant psychotherapy offer? Has that developed?

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

We have a parent-infant psychotherapist who is now based within that early intervention team. So that remains in post, very much in demand, has a large caseload, but is working through. There has been some discussion about whether that post best sits within C.A.M.H.S service or as part of some of the restructure it should sit elsewhere. But at the moment it is in place and I think providing very valuable work in service.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

What is the linkage between parent-infant psychotherapy and, for example, the programmes that are delivered by Family Nursing and Home Care, like the sort of the M.E.C.S.H (Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home Visiting) programme? Is there any kind of synergy between those 2 programmes?

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

That is a good question, but I would need to go back and ask. I cannot answer that one at the moment but I can get you the answer to that to see what discussions they have.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you. We would be interested because they would be working with similar families, will they not, maybe delivering different models, so I just wanted to know how they work together? Thank you.

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes, I will come back on that one.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Also, the last time we spoke you talked about finalising and implementing the transition policy between kind of children's and adult services. Just wondering how that is going.

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes, it is still not over the line. We had our children's governance oversight group again in January. I think the next meeting is the end of March. I reiterated to the people that are working on that offering it has to be completed to be bringing back to that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So when we see you next quarter?

[14:30]

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes, yes. Again, there has been work completed on that by C.A.M.H.S. and it has been handed over and we are waiting for that to come back. We are pushing really hard on that. It is a crucial policy to have completed.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

It is, absolutely. It has been a running sore for many years, has it not? You know, children sort of falling off a cliff really when they should not be.

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

My last question then was about your eating disorder service. I think we talked briefly about that last time and can you just give us an update on how that is running and the services you are able to offer on Island?

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes, so we have an eating disorder service and within that we have a lead eating disorder nurse, we have a systemic therapist, we have psychology input and we have a system psychology input. Post-COVID we saw quite an escalation in eating disorders of young people in Jersey. Referrals to that service have reduced over the last 12 months. Previously, we have had young people receiving support in hospital and sometimes on occasions off-Island as well, but we have nobody currently either in a hospital or off-Island receiving treatment. There are a small number of young people that are getting that treatment within that community C.A.M.H.S. eating disorder service. We still have a vacancy in terms of a specialist dietitian which we would like to recruit to, which we have advertised periodically and struggled to recruit to, but we have a really excellent U.K.-based dietitian that is providing virtual oversight and support that works particularly well. She is very well-renowned as well, so in some ways that works particularly well but we would like to have somebody obviously Jersey based at some point but that would be the final piece really to complete that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is that dietitian considered to be a front line post or would that be affected by the recruitment freeze?

Associate Director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

I would imagine a front line post, yes.

Director of Children's Services:

I do not think there has been anything in C.A.M.H.S. that has been affected by that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

By the recruitment freeze. Okay, that is lovely, thank you.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Just to ask something related to that last question, and I do not know if you will know this now, is the eating disorder A.R.F.I.D. (avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder) recognised? Is that included, A.R.F.I.D?

Associate Director of Children’s Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It is?

Associate Director of Children’s Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes, yes, yes. I know you might have well seen “Sky News”, there was an article on the news this week about the growing prevalence of that, particularly in neurodiverse children, limited food intakes and limited food restrictions around that. Certainly local groups such as All Matters Neurodiverse have been raising that issue. Yes, so our service would consider that and sometimes when there are specialist natures of things we would look for outside consultation to support because that can be a real challenge.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

There is a lot of research, is there not, around that girls are presumed to have an eating disorder when in fact it was actually autism that was being manifested through an eating disorder.

Associate Director of Children’s Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes, yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thanks for that. I now have some questions which are about play and the play strategy.

The Minister for Children and Families:

You can breathe now, Darren. But I would say that, you know, despite this having not been with us that long, we have made some excellent progress. We have not just Malcolm, but we have a member of staff who is fully employed on it. You have some very clear objectives of what you want to see, Malcolm, so I will hand over to you. But I have got to say that, having picked this up, I think it was always wrong that it was shared between 3 ministries because that was never going to work. But, no, Malcolm has done some excellent work, so I will leave it to him.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, so the first question was just about that, which was what progress has been made with the play policy and strategy since our last hearing?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Lots of work had already been done on the play policy and that forms the basis of the play strategy. So it is a really useful document that we are going to append to the final play strategy so we are still very much in the discovery stage as far as engaging with stakeholders and individuals and groups. We are really lucky that we have got lots of people who are vocal in the community and really passionate about seeing positive change for play. We also understand the challenges because as you look around the parishes not all of them are controlled or owned by the parish some have quite complex arrangements where one group or organisation owns and another part of the Government pays for. We need to get to the bottom of how those work and how they can continue to be funded and secured for the future. But the work itself, we have already got a working document which is going to form the basis of the strategy. We are already feeding into that. We do have an officer who ... it is part of her role, to be fair, but she is putting most energy into the front end of this so that we can get it moving. Interestingly, so just this morning, we met with Ports of Jersey and discovered their opportunities for play spaces both at the airport and at the harbour during their refurbishment ... which is not quite the right term because it is going to be a wholesale rebuilding of those areas. But when we look at play, as well as indoor spaces and outdoor spaces, it is not just about the apparatus, it is about creating opportunities for children to play and turn them into learning experiences. We are looking at the concept of play rangers who can help facilitate play between parents and children, because there are parents who do not know properly how to play with their children. They have never had that coaching or one parent does the play and the other parent does the serious stuff and actually it should be a shared objective. Play can be as simple as open places, safe open places and sticks, you know, where young people can just run around and have fun, because that is ... the thrust of it should be about having fun. Then, of course, we also need to make those play spaces as accessible as possible for people who are wheelchair users or young people who have neurodivergence. We have some really good opportunities with Springfield and Millennium Park to make sure that we get that right. We have seen the plans and we have discussed the plans with young people at Schools Council the other week. The overriding messages from those young people were: "You have asked us a lot, we would like to see some action now." So while we are going to get a final check-in with young people, we are not going to do another big round of consultation with young people. They have given us all that we need. What we now need to do is start trying ground some of that out.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. That is a lot of work and you said you have a working document so when do you think there might be a play strategy published?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

The timeline is to have it by the end of the year and I am hoping that we will finish it before that time. I am always ambitious on these things. If we do finish it before the end of the year we will publish it beforehand but at the very latest it will be the end of the year.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

You mentioned the parishes already, so how are the parishes being engaged to ensure equal access to play facilities across the Island?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Great, so I am meeting with the Comité des Connétable in February and that starts off that conversation to see what the appetite is, what the offer is. A big part of the work is we are going to create a digital map of all the assets around the Island and, most importantly, who owns those assets, who funds those assets and there will be a sort of system of red, amber, green rating. Green being top-notch, in good condition and fit for purpose, amber being with some small adjustments could be made much better and obviously red being non-existent, where there is a prime opportunity or in such a state of dilapidated repair that it is not safe. But also when we are looking at play spaces, indoor and outdoor, there should be some element of risk for young people. We do not want sanitised play spaces. We want places where young people can take calculated risks because if we make them completely sanitised with rubber and so on, young people do not learn that there are consequences to taking those risks. It is really important that as part of play, young people get that concept early on.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So although the play strategy is resting with you, how are interdepartmental efforts, so like with Infrastructure and Environment, being co-ordinated for the provision of play space?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

It is very important that we keep both of those ministries on board because they are still fundamental to how this will play out in the long term. I have already had meetings with the Minister for Infrastructure, who is very much on board with the concept of the play strategy and creating play spaces. Very often, it will at the end of the day come down to money. But my task is create the vision, create the strategy as to what we should be having and then funding should follow that. My job is not to create the funding, it is to create the opportunities.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Are there any proposed changes to planning rules in order to streamline the process?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Not that I know of, but one of the planning rules that probably we should need to enforce a bit more stringently is where big developments go up, then play spaces are incorporated into those developments. Because, yes, it is fairly fundamental that where you have got big areas of development, there needs to be lots of little pockets of where people can play. It can be as simple as ... we met with some of ... I cannot remember who it was now, but we met somebody who just showed us another city where all they have is concrete ping pong tables and young people play with them on the way to school. It is just literally stop off for a couple of minutes, have a little game and then walk on their way. So everyone walks around with table tennis bats and ping pong balls, and that is what they do. Even that, people start to play with other young people who they do not know, it starts conversations and that is just littered throughout the city. It can be really simple, thoughtful things that we can do to create more opportunities for play.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So we should expect to see play areas included in developments.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

It is already part of the Island Plan.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It would be good to see that happen.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

But we need to make sure that that is considered on every development.

The Minister for Children and Families:

There is another planning issue which is that some large bits of equipment, but not particularly large actually, need planning consent in Jersey. Whereas they do not need planning consent in the U.K. That is an area we need to look at. I think the Parish of St. Martin had to get planning permission for one of their bits of equipment.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

The Viking swing.

The Minister for Children and Families:

The Viking swing. It is not that large that you would think it needs planning permission.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I have sat on that swing.

The Minister for Children and Families:

So that required planning permission to be put up.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It is unnecessary.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think the same as in the U.K., such things should be exempt.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, okay. My last question on play, which I think is a really important one. Minister, what specific measures are you taking to ensure teenagers have access to outside spaces and adequate sports and fitness facilities, particularly in urban areas, but all over the Island?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Well, I think from my own point of view, with the developments that are taking place, there are green spaces there but we are going to work with our youth club and Youth Service to get the type of equipment that teenagers require, because it is quite different. We had a consultation last Friday, it was at the Parish Hall, and sadly there were not a great number of teenagers but there were enough that they expressed a view as to what they would like to see. You know, they are quite keen on certain types of exercise equipment and larger bits of equipment. They say that most of what they see is aimed at much younger children and I think that is true. So, yes, we are making a very positive effort to get the views of teenagers.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

In the play strategy is there an area to focus on teenagers?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, so it is really important that when we look at indoor and outdoor spaces we do cater for younger young people and teenagers, because they have got as much right to play as anybody else. They are still covered by the Article 31 and we do need to make sure that they are completely taken into account. But, as the Minister has just mentioned, our Jersey Youth Service does create lots of opportunities to play, which for lots of people turns into opportunities to play sport, which is still part of play. There are some really good offers around the Island that teenagers can engage with.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, lots of good sports facilities around the Island but a lot of them have to be paid for as well. Is there any work being done on what is available for teenagers in the way of sports and fitness that does not require payment?

[14:45]

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Again, the Jersey Youth Service has opportunities to access sports facilities, not least at St. Peter. There is great sports halls and opportunities to engage in physical activity and physical play in that way. Most of the youth centres have those indoor facilities and some have access to outdoor spaces as well, which is just as important.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Through the Youth Service?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, from the Jersey Youth Service.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think what teenagers were interested in was along the seafront there were bits of equipment, were there not? I am afraid some of them are not looking in particularly good condition now. But that is the type of thing, something that was aimed at their age group. That is the sort of things they are looking at.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thanks for that.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Malcolm was going to come for a consultation but sadly there is only one of him and he was ...

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

That is very sad, Minister.

The Minister for Children and Families:

But we are going to see the architect, are we not?

Deputy H.M. Miles:

We just had a couple of questions over the long-term youth facility planning. We need to pick up with what is happening with Le Squez, really. At the last panel, I think we mentioned about the remedial work at the Le Squez youth facility and we were wondering if you could just update us what remedial work has been done there.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, so there is a sum of money set aside for some very basic remedial work in the short term. Some of that is to improve the lighting in the place base outside and some of it is just a general tidy up of the area. To be honest, it is a relatively small sum of money. The long-term plan is still to develop that whole area after the Town Youth Centre is completed or towards the end of that process.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

That is still going to be quite a way away. We are looking at 2029, are we not?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

2028 for the Town Youth Centre to be finished. Le Squez could be started just before that Town Youth Centre gets put into place. Yes, it is still a couple of years away but at the moment it is just a relatively small sum of money to do the basics and make sure the area is safe and usable. I have visited the site and while it is ... obviously the area itself at the time it was built when the previous development was done, the surrounding buildings have all been updated, that is perhaps why it looks a bit older, but it is still safe and usable, a really good space.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, thank you. I think we have probably touched on this before, but how are you engaging the young people in the planning for the new St. Helier facilities?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, so we are engaging with ... we have a number of initiatives going on where we are still going to -- we have got a town youth service board on the top end of it, if you like, and that is mainly from colleagues from Treasury and other departments who are going to have an interest in developing it. But through the Jersey Youth Service itself, of course, we are still engaging with young people about what they want to see and what type of facilities would be best placed. We have got pre-planning advice, so we have got some well-drawn-up plans about what it is actually going to contain. Some of the pre-planning advice was just to turn down some of the light so it does not pollute, there is not too much light pollution. There was some advice for the kick pitch outside, just to make sure that, again, noise pollution was not too severe.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is the fact that it is listed causing a problem?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

It is Grade 1 listed inside and out so there will be some challenges to that. It is a lovely quirky old building but some of the things that we want to achieve will have to be worked around. The plus side of that is there is some fantastic artifacts which will really make the building a feature. I suppose the challenge is the association with alcohol. The theme is grain and growth rather than producing alcohol. We do not want to lose the fact of what the building was but I think it will make it a more exciting building. Yes, there will be some challenges.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So it is going to be a case of managing expectations then with the young people about what they ...

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Managing expectations and some of the things that we would perhaps like to do, like the big cylindrical vat in the middle, is going to present a challenge because our initial thoughts were we cut it up and get it out of the building. That is not going to happen but actually the cost of cutting it up and getting it out of the building would have been huge. So why not just turn that into a feature and there might be opportunities to create little platforms within it and little cubbyhole rooms where people can meet. So just turn it into a quirky feature.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

It is being really innovative, is it not?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, exactly.

The Connétable of Grouville:

As long as it does not smell like it used to.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Exactly.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

It has not been brewed in for a while, has it? Thank you for that. My next set of questions are around the development of the multidisciplinary service and the implementation of the therapeutic practice model. Minister, you told us during the proposed budget hearing on 16th October that within

families, you are looking at multidisciplinary service development, system-wide quality improvement, practice model enhancement. Could you just us some more details on the planned service development, how is it going to be structured, what your key outcomes are?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes. I will just introduce it. This was part of the presentation that we gave to C.o.M. (Council of Ministers) yesterday. The Children's Reform Programme has been reshaped to create more of a focus on supporting families and creating high quality therapeutic intervention. As part of that not only do we need the right people but we need the right buildings in which to undertake those services. There is now a 5-year reform plan looking forward. For the first time we have a plan that looks forward to 5 years and has ... I have to say that Donna has made this a priority since she arrived in April and no stone has been left unturned with regard to what the current costs are, what they might be in the future, the number of children we support, which we know is going to increase. As I say, it is a plan that covers the whole of the service. I will Donna to give you some more information.

Director of Children's Services:

The reform programme that the Minister's talking about, we have split it into 3 strands, 3 key strands really. One of them is supporting families, which most of the multidisciplinary work sits under but a second part which the Minister's talking about, which is I suppose homes, residential care and care for children, we have also got some multidisciplinary capacity that is going to be built into that as well. There is a multidisciplinary model but sitting in 2 different bits. One bit sits across from early help all the way through until children come into care in that safeguarding space and the early intervention space. The plan is there, we have started to mobilise to have some extra youth work, C.A.M.H.S. intervention and some extra social work capacity around exploitation and missing some of the risks that are associated around that. That multidisciplinary team will not be case-holding like a social work team, they will sit alongside the service. You have children that have child in need or child protection plans, this team will offer extra capacity and support around some of those more specialist areas. They will do a piece of intervention for about 6 weeks that will help the child and the family and then they will move on and do other work. Then, separately, the multidisciplinary offer in residential and the fostering space, the care space, Darren's already started to mobilise the children in care C.A.M.H.S. team around that. There is a manager in there now, there is some recruitment going on to try and get the psychology and other support in place for that. They will wrap around both the residential and foster care workforce that support children. They are not there to case hold the same because they will still have a C.A.M.H.S. intervention. This will help the teams to work more effectively with the children and feel more confident around their specialist areas. That work is scheduled in for being ... that team has been scheduled in the plan to be delivered in the next 6 months, it will not all be in place but we have already mobilised. I think we have got 4 family

support workers already in post, one social worker has just being recruited, one of the C.A.M.H.S. managers is already in place there to do that as well, through Darren's team, and we are just about to go out to adverts in the coming weeks for some of the other posts. It will probably also include some intervention around substance misuse of parents and domestic abuse support as well. So it will be a whole streamlined offer across the whole piece that will hopefully be able to support all families. It will only be a small team but it will stretch across and that is why it will not case hold. That is built properly into the plan. We are just mobilising about where they are going to be best located to make that work, and within there there will be a training offer and a development offer within those staff. We have not quite fully nailed what the C.A.M.H.S. offer will look like yet. We have had some thinking about whether some of that might be some systems psychology as well to try to make it more sustainable, really, and to also get pathways into development for workforce as well, so make it a little bit more interesting to try and get people in.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

What do you think the challenges are going to be around making this model work, about implementing the model?

Director of Children's Services:

In the U.K., they do the family safeguarding model. It is a really effective model. It has been really well researched. It has come up really well with outcomes for children. It has resulted heavily in reduction in the local authorities that have implemented it, like Hertfordshire. It has had a really big success rate in reducing needs, so reducing children out of statutory intervention and pushing need downhill a bit. It has also had a reduction in children in care as well so you would hope that it will help to keep children at home, because it is much more about being wrapped around families. For the children in care, we would hope that it will lead to better intervention for them, better quality care, obviously a reduction in need you would hope as well. We obviously have quite a lot of children that are presenting quite late to come into care, that is about the history, the legacy, and as time goes on you would want that to happen less and the intervention to be a bit more effective.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

You refer to this as kind of the therapeutic practice model?

Director of Children's Services:

It is not ... yes, I suppose there has been a lot of discussion over time about opening a therapeutic home and I think what we have talked about more is what we want is to have a whole service offer that is not just about one home. Now our practice model was bought into back in 2018, so it is quite a longstanding practice model.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

That was going to be my question actually. Is this a transition out of the practice model into the therapeutic model?

Director of Children's Services:

Not really. What we do not want to do is undo the investment and the work that has gone into the Jersey Children's First Practice Model. It has been here since 2018. I think what we would say is - and what is obvious - it has not really landed as strong as you want it to or has been effective as what you want it to.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Why do you think that is?

Director of Children's Services:

Change. I think there has been a lot of change across the system. I think probably the practice model when it was built and rolled out is very ... how can I describe it? It is quite an academic model in thinking, a quite theoretical model, and I think with the work we have been doing over the recent months is really that that is good, you do need that theoretical model, which is the therapeutic part about being strength-based, about being restorative, all those things are really important in practice, but they need to sit on something that makes sense to people in how they implement it. The work that we have been doing ... Darren has been leading on this strand actually. As part of the reform programme, Darren's been running the supporting family strand, leading on it, and part of that work in that practice model is to say, well, yes, you want those therapeutic theoretical approaches, you want everyone to be trauma-informed because it is children we work with. It is absolutely critical but it needs to be sitting on something that is concrete, that makes sense. That is about the team around the child and the family, about having that lead professional that takes responsibility, about joining up our meetings around the child, making a joined-up plan, so the work that we have got going on at the moment is that. It is trying to take the theoretical model we have taught everyone, like we had quite a lot of people that have trained over the years in that therapeutic trauma-informed and now we are saying how do we make that really become something that is implemented in practice and real in day-to-day life. The pilot has just started now. We have started one of the pilots with one in one of the children's homes, in our secure home actually is this plan, to pilot that around a group of children, a small group of children, and test it out to make it better get implemented. Then we have got a programme over the next 3 to 6 months that is going to really land implementing it fully across children's social care and get it really working and operating.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

You talk about a joined-up approach. In Jersey we have quite a reliance on third sector and charity involvement to deliver services to children.

[15:00]

I am thinking of Brighter Futures are a classic example. Certainly they were very much part of the Jersey Children First model, so that the third sector would be expected to join in this. What thoughts and actions are you taking to engage those sorts of sectors within your new model?

Director of Children's Services:

They are part of the plan, the broader plan, but everyone has already been trained and still are trained. The model still sits online. There is still the training pack that goes with it; that is all carrying on. What we have decided we need to do is to get it working better in one bit of the system. We have decided that that is where we are going to do it in children's social care, along with the reform programme, to learn this part of making practice a reality and making the theory a reality, and then once we have got that working this year we will roll that out. We have started on a little bit and then we will start to then roll it out as part of a wider plan.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Have you had engagement with the charities in the third sector about what you are doing at the moment?

Director of Children's Services:

Not at the moment, no.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay. It is public now.

Director of Children's Services:

Yes, yes. The model works very well, everyone has been trained, it is an open offer where there is an expectation that every partner and organisation is doing it.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

At what point are you going to communicate with the third sector that this is what you are doing and that you will be engaging them to support you in delivering the best for children?

Director of Children's Services:

Yes, probably not yet because what we want to do is pile up what we have got, test the model because the core of it is really about the practice around the child's child protection plan or the child in need plan. We need to make that work in the system first. Then once we have got that done, now the reform programme and the new plan is then to come, we will start to roll it out across all of the partners and services to make people aware. The people will start to see that coming through. We are just building a comms plan around it now, so it will happen. I think we have got to do it in the right order this time and try to get it working properly somewhere and then ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

You are really coming at it top down this time.

Director of Children's Services:

Yes, yes, yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, thank you. Sorry, I have talked ...

Director of Children's Services:

I think we need to perfect it somewhere.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, I think that is you, Mark, is it?

The Connétable of Grouville:

Me?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Minister, the next section is about the Jersey Family Justice Council and Child Contact Centre. How will your department be working with the newly established Jersey Family Justice Council to address the issues identified in Family Court proceedings, such as trauma and domestic abuse?

The Minister for Children and Families:

We are a member of the Family Justice Council. We are working with others to achieve those aims. I think it existed previously but it has recently been re-formed. It is fairly new, certainly to me and I think to most people. But the way that they have set about this is that they have set up a number of

subgroups and we sit on a number of those, including a working group on the Voice of the Child, there is a working group on training and pre-proceedings. It is fairly early days on how that will be achieved and to see how those working groups ... the success of those working groups. We have still got to see what comes out of that. I have got good expectations with the range of people on the Family Justice Council, that we will see some very positive outcomes from that.

The Connétable of Grouville:

The specialist court for addiction-affected families.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, that is something that was raised at the Family Justice Council. I do not think it is a specific area for Children's Services. I would support such a court but I was asked about funding and there is simply no funding certainly from us. Justice and Home Affairs also sit on there and I would have thought the funding for the court is more likely to come from that area.

The Connétable of Grouville:

We will ask the Minister.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Might have to question more on that, yes.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes, we will have that ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

But certainly from us I have to say we are at the moment likely to see a deficit already for 2025 without further funding anyway, as the whole of Children's Services. There simply are no funds from us for any additional projects.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Sure. Considering that funding shortfall, we are also concerned about Jersey's only Child Contact Centre and how that is going to work.

The Minister for Children and Families:

It is Jersey's only contact centre for private family law matters. I think we will have to make a distinction between that and the large number of children who use the services that we provide for anything that is not a private family matter. We provide services to all other children.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can I just say though I think it is the only contact centre where separated parents, where one parent may need supervision ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

For private family court matters we provide that service for ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Most of those families that will be separated or they are in either dispute or there is an area there they are often in private family law. Children's social care would tend not to be involved in organising the contact arrangements; that will be more through J.F.C.A.S. (Jersey Family Court Advisory Service) and the legal system. Whereas for children in public law proceedings that are in care, all of that oversight for that family time is done by children's social care in our ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

What I would also say ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Through different groups of children ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

For our interest this was raised in the Family Justice Council and there was a judge from the U.K. online who quite clearly said that these services are not provided by any council in the U.K. and paid for by any council in the U.K. Private family law matters are not funded by councils in the U.K.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, but they are still children and families and they need the service and ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

I know there is a tenuous link in some ways there because this is a court matter.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I was involved with trying to help the previous contact centre, Milli's, which was staffed by a lot of volunteers and what they did for a long time helped a lot of families. They closed down because of new conditions, which were necessary, then Centrepoint, I believe, was asked to take the service on.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Presumably they need support from somewhere.

The Minister for Children and Families:

My understanding is the funding was for one year and then funding was to be found from alternative sources; that was my understanding of that. We did not offer permanent funding.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Do you want me to pick this up?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, you can. But what I would say is it does not necessarily sit with Children's Services. It is more a judicial matter. Certainly in the U.K. any funding that does come from Government comes from C.A.F.C.A.S.S. (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service), which is part of the Home Office. Again, this is a Justice and Home Affairs matter. Malcolm will follow. We, potentially, have some arrangements for the next couple of years but it is not something that Children's Services will pick up on a permanent basis because it does not fall within our area.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

But having said that, I have been working with Centrepoin since the tail end of last year because they did highlight that they had an issue, which was funding was going to run out in February of this year. They are a charity, I started to give them some options for new funding streams, which to be fair to them, they put in place and made applications for. It is probably a little bit late in the day to start that process because when your funding is running out in 3 months' time a lot of these funders need far more advanced notice of that. In between times I have got an officer who is connecting with Centrepoin to find out what their financial need is and we have got the scope of that. Obviously I do not want to talk about what that is in this forum. But we understand what they need going forwards. We are working with them to find a solution in the short term, on the understanding that going forwards they will either need to fundraise or to find a funder who will continue that forwards. But what it does allow them to have is some breathing space where they can continue the service. Because while it is not directly our responsibility, ultimately I think there is merit in the fact that children and young people are still being assisted by that service. While it is not directly in our control, the overall concept of helping children is and this is part of that. I am determined to find a solution in the short term on the proviso that they find their own longer-term solution.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We are not unsympathetic to the situation and, therefore, I have asked Malcolm to look at it. But it is not something that we will pick up permanently.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

No.

The Minister for Children and Families:

It does not fall within our area. It is very much within really Justice and Home Affairs.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

It is the court actually.

The Minister for Children and Families:

It is the court.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, the court, yes.

The Minister for Children and Families:

It is not a Children's Services matter.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

It is not Justice and Home Affairs, it is the court.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We certainly do not have the money, so that any funding that is found will not come from us.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

But we will find a short-term solution.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We are looking at a short-term solution for funding but not from our budget.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thank you for that. Any matters that regard the welfare of children we are going to ask about.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, absolutely and, hopefully, we have given you some surety that in the short term at least we are working on a solution.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Oddly enough I am going to be dealing with planning.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Planning.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Minister, following the issues with planning permission for a local children's home, which I am sure we are all aware of, what lessons have been learned by the department to streamline future applications for children's homes?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Part of that process is still ongoing, so there is a limited amount that I am going to say on the matter. That situation is not resolved in the matter and I still have some matters ongoing. But I think certainly from my point of view and I have said it before, I think it is matter not just for me but it is a matter for the Assembly whether they really think that having a cared-for child in a house merits it needing planning permission. I do not believe it does. I think it is wrong. Once I have finalised matters with regard to that particular home, my view is I certainly will raise the matter with the Minister for Planning. My intention would be to bring a proposition to have children's homes with 4 or less children exempted from the planning process if it is a transfer from an existing residential home. I do not understand why it needs planning permission. If the same house was rented to the parents of those children, they could move in instantly and no one would raise any objections to it. It does not make sense.

The Connétable of Grouville:

I am in the Planning Department ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

I am sorry I cannot say more at the moment. I still have some matters in respect of that particular home that are unresolved.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Okay. My next question was to ask you if you had engaged with the Planning Department and clearly you have.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I have.

The Connétable of Grouville:

That is negated ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

Or we will be. Donna.

Director of Children's Services:

Yes. You had asked about learning around planning. I think looking back, I was not here, I think, is important to recognise that what did not quite happen right at the front end of that, which you are referring to, was outside of our control. Because it was a court-ordered arrangement that that arrangement happened. Then that triggered the whole range of events that happened and then you are trying to catch up behind it. We are trying to work quite hard with the judiciary and in practice with the staff about not getting into arrangements where we are setting up solar homes. It is really important not to do that because you cannot do that in a quick way. You need planning and then you need registration of the children's home and that takes a lot of time and a lot of effort, so that is months. We cannot just do that overnight in a quick way in response to need. That is why we have got to fix the residential estate so we have the right homes that we can use in the right way because they are already open, rather than getting into those quite challenging spaces. That is why we need a new residential estate and a new plan, so that there is more flexibility and better economies of scale to care for children as they come into care properly.

[15:15]

The Connétable of Grouville:

That makes sense. Minister, the next question: can you advise the panel with an update about the work of the children in care council? Has this been established?

The Minister for Children and Families:

The children in care council is in the process of being established. As you know, we had outsourced it but we took it back in house initially and then it is now being placed with our Independent ...

Director of Children's Services:

Reviewing Officer Service.

The Minister for Children and Families:

... Reviewing Officer. They are taking it forward and they are making quite good progress. We took it in house because we needed to accelerate the forming of the children in care council. It did not appear to be making the progress we wanted and it appeared to be possibly yet another long delay before it was formed and, therefore, we took it in house. But I am satisfied now that we are making the progress and where it is being placed it also retains a degree of independence.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Could you give us an idea of its priorities going forward?

The Minister for Children and Families:

To us it has a great deal of priority because it feeds into the Corporate Parenting Board. Yes, Donna can give that. I think it was back in 2023 that we initially ...

Director of Children's Services:

Before that, I think it contracted in 2023 to start a new contract to develop it. But I think there has been a long history of trying to get the children in care council operating over time. I think it is important that we recognise that I do not think it is something you just do in a simplistic way, it is something you build over time has been my experience. What we have done is created the new Corporate Parenting Board and the structure now has a thematic structure to it. It has got 4 subgroups sitting underneath there. One of those subgroups is a participation subgroup. That participation subgroup is made up of all the different agencies and people involved in participation for children. You have got C.A.M.H.S., we have got policy there. There are some people like arm's length bodies that are corporate parenting law, like Jersey Arts and Jersey Sport. There is lots of people all around that table starting to build a participation plan for children in care and care leavers. That plan is like an annual calendar we have created and that starts to map out all different things that will deal with young people to get them engaged and starting to say: "What are the services like that I get in Jersey? What is my care like? What is the things that do not work for me and need to look different?" That will help, that group will start to get those children's voices much more understood and that will design the plan about what we need to look different going forward. It has got a participation plan for the year that has been built. It will go to the board next month I think it is, so the next Corporate Parenting Board. That includes like a celebration event for children in care and care leavers, it includes Come Dine With Me, it has got some participation events; a whole range of different activities about how we engage young people to get their voice. We have had the

Bright Spots survey, which is an independent U.K. national organisation that has done a survey of young people's views and told us the things that do not work for them and is not right or the things that do. That has helped to shape the participation plan and the things we need to focus on this year. That has provided an action plan of the things we need to do differently. As we start to engage those young people ... so in the first 3 months of having the new programme, 10 young people have said to us they are interested in being involved in the children in care council. It will not really be a real thing until we have got a group of young people to start to shape it and it will form over time itself. It will become real as it goes along and then those young people start to drive more about the design and delivery of services and what they should look like and what needs to be different. Then eventually they will kind of become the council and take it over. When it works well it is fantastic but it does take time. But what we know is quite confidently just in those few months in the 3 participation events we have had, we have got young people coming forward saying: "I might be a little bit interested in that and I might want to do it" and just coming on board a little bit, so that will create it. We have sat in with the Independent Reviewing Officer Service because the Independent Reviewing Officer's team sits separate, it is independent from children's social care. It is the team that review the care plans for children that is not in the social work team. They bring independent challenge and independent oversight. We sat in there because they review every childcare plan that is in our care. They are in touch and in contact with every child and they will help us to get that window into them because they will be able to ... every review we will be talking to them about being part of it.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is that team fully staffed now?

Director of Children's Services:

The I.R.O. (Independent Reviewing Officer) Service, maybe we have got some agency staff in there but I am not aware of any vacancies. I would need to check off the top of my head but it is made a lot of progress, the I.R.O. Service, compared to our previous inspection.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Talking of implementation, the panel would like to be advised about what types of accommodation are used to house young people and care leavers and if the accommodation used is on a temporary or long-term basis.

Director of Children's Services:

Do you want me to pick that up or ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

You can, yes. I will let you do that.

Director of Children's Services:

Under the reform programme, that loving home strand about care, we have got a big piece of work going on currently. Under the Corporate Parenting Board one of those other subgroups is a home and housing subgroup. We brought together all of the professionals or we have tried to around home and housing. The housing providers, the P.A.s (personal advisers) in the children in care, care-leaving bit and the children's social work teams, our housing policy where we have got the issues around population and all of those sorts of things to work through. They have built an action plan underneath there. One of those strands in the action plan is about working on pathways for young people into independence. We have not got sufficient accommodation in the space where young people need support before they are ready to move on to become independent or necessarily a good glide path into that that you would want to see. The work under the reform programme is saying we need to build that. The new 5-year plan builds more accommodation for 16 to 19 year-old young people so that they could come through care and into independence in the right way for them. More work we have been doing with things like Andium to try to build pathways into accommodation for young people in the Island that will be built in as a standardised thing that makes sure that young people have got accommodation available. Currently we have hostel accommodation that is used, that has been historically always used. I think one of your queries last time that we responded to is about the Jersey Youth and ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Association for Youth and Friendship, yes.

Director of Children's Services:

Yes. They have got like 5 properties on the Island, there is other hostel providers. That is part of the offer currently for any young person who is over 18 or over 17 can go and use accommodation. Our care leavers could go there and do. I do not think that would be our first choice of accommodation but it is an offer that they have. We have got young people in supported accommodation, which is our own accommodation. It is C.Y.P.E.S., a children's home really where we have got 17-plus, 16, 17, 18-plus young people and up to 20 residing in there when they have supported like care staff on site. We have got a property around which does that. Then young people will be in some tenancies, social housing tenancies and we will have young people in halls of residence in uni that we will be supporting and fronting as well. It is what you would expect really, a whole range. I think, as I said, we have got more to do to create more accommodation and it to be more thought through and more future-focused and more sustainable and that is the work and

the plan to create that and create more accommodation in different parts of the Island, that there will be flats and things like that, that young people have better move-on options.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Is the hostel accommodation classed as temporary or ...

Director of Children's Services:

It is temporary but classed as suitable currently in our ... and I took it away from the last Scrutiny Panel to have a look, did I not? We are using it, it is a very tiny number of young people we have got in there, I have to say but it is used. Sometimes young people might vote with their own feet into that arrangement. The young people we have got in hostel accommodation it is in supported accommodation. Like Jersey Youth and Friendship has got support attached to the offer, the staffing in there that is supporting those arrangements. Normally our young people should have a personal adviser and they should be visiting and looking at young people's well-being and building part of the plan to support them and helping them to move on to next steps. A lot of the personal advisers' roles will be helping young people to get into accommodation to support navigating the housing pathways and working their way through into that more permanent arrangement. But I think I would say we have got work to do. It is not where we want it to be yet but it is built into the plan. I think probably some work to do with those providers to make sure that we are all assured that it is right and it meets young people's needs as well and that is part of the plan.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thank you for that. We are nearly out of time but we have just a few questions on the U.N. (United Nations) Committee on the Rights of the Child recommendations.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Okay.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Jersey was criticised in 2023 for some of the ... there is concerns by the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child. Minister, how has your department and wider Government been addressing the recommendations from the U.N. Committee to ensure Jersey's practices align with international standards?

The Minister for Children and Families:

We continue to work to meet those standards. We have legislation coming in this week, which further aligns us. Well, next week at next week's Assembly that further aligns us with the U.N.C.R.C.

(United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child) relationships. There are areas I know of concern. I am trying to ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

One that I have here in front of me was about the children placed in care in the U.K. but there was a lack of legislation around how they were getting on.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, that is something we continue to work on. The change of the U.K. Government has not helped. But I think, Andrew, you have managed to re-engage, have you, recently with the U.K. Government?

Assistant Director of Policy:

Yes, I can help, would that be okay?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, yes.

Assistant Director of Policy:

You are quite right, there are 3 particular areas that were specific to Jersey where the U.N. Committee were looking for assurance. One of those was about young people placed off Island. One of the elements of the response to that has been working with our policy colleagues in the D.f.E. (Department for Education) with regard to any reciprocal arrangements. As the Minister said, the general election in the U.K. kind of intervened, shall we say? Then as a new Government came in with their own aspirations and legislation that took place, I am pleased to say that we came up out of the other side. I have spoken to D.f.E. colleagues. We do have an agreed scope for amendment. We do have an agreed plan on how to do that. In speaking generally, the U.K. Government published a statement in November 2024 called Keeping Children Safe and Helping Families Thrive. Underneath that statement there was some proposed legislative change. How our - which is quite small - legislative change would sit alongside that and go through the proper process alongside. Where I am with that, where the Minister is with that, is waiting for the timelines. I agree it is not going as fast as we would like but we have managed to make some progress and come up the other side of a general election and a new Government in the U.K. I think, if I may, Minister, to say a bit more on that subject.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, yes, yes, if you want, yes.

[15:30]

Assistant Director of Policy:

Donna can come in here, the recent Jersey Care Commission inspection of Children's Social Services were satisfied with the arrangements for placing children off Island and acknowledged that some children were receiving high-quality care, which I think the Minister certainly took assurance of that. Secondly, we maintain and are working quite closely with the Children's Commissioner and communication and focus is both productive and purposeful. We are not over the line but there are actions in train with regard to that particular recommendation from the U.N. Committee.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, so it is like a work in progress at the moment, yes.

Assistant Director of Policy:

Yes, there is a couple of elements to it but there is a work in progress, yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Will the Government provide a formal response or progress update to the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Assistant Director of Policy:

The Minister will be making a formal response and the Minister has agreed the scope of that response. There were over 200 recommendations. Most of the discussion has been about, what would be the most purposeful? Being a civil servant there is nothing I like best than producing a very long document that nobody refers to, but apparently that is not what the Minister wants. We will go for something that is proportionate, is relevant to this Government in terms of what it is trying to propose and pursue. We will be publishing it and the Minister will be taking it forward and presenting it to the States this year. We hope to be furnishing the Minister in late Q2 with that report. Yes, that is the intention and the Minister has signalled that to the Children's Commissioner's office too.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That is great. I think that is all the questions done, okay. All right. Thank you very much.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Thank you very much.

[15:32]