

2.10 The Connétable of St. Helier of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding strategy to increase the number of children accessing early years' education and care:

Would the Minister outline his timetable for achieving the commitment in the Strategic Plan (2.7.1) to bring forward a strategy to increase the number of children with access to affordable and equitable early years' education and care, and indicate his preferred implementation date for the new arrangements?

Senator M.E. Vibert (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

The Council of Ministers has set up a cost-cutting departmental group looking at the whole issue of care and education for the 0 to 5 age range. That group will be reporting back before the end of this year. It encompasses the early years' education and care for the 3 to 5 year-olds, which was a subject of a report to this House. In that report, the implementation date was set at 2008. My personal preference would be as soon as possible, but I accept it is a complicated issue.

2.10.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

Would the Minister be willing to consider using the existing budget he has for early years' education and care in States' nursery centres, to spread that across the many parents and guardians of children who do not have access to that free care? Does he believe this could be achieved some time next year?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Yes, that is one of the options we are currently looking at: how we can make best use of the budget. In all our dealings on this, we have emphasised the importance of working with the non-States sector, because we recognise we cannot provide everything ourselves. We need to have a very good working relationship and support each other. So we will be looking at that and of course I will be looking at the timetable of when it can be achieved. I will be reporting back to the States once we have further information on this.