

# STATES OF JERSEY

## Education and Home Affairs Early Years Review Sub-Panel

**MONDAY, 5th NOVEMBER 2007**

**Panel:**

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence (Chairman)

Deputy J. Gallichan of St. Mary

Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier

Dr. C. Hamer (Panel Adviser)

**Witnesses:**

Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier

Ms. J. Baker (Avranches Day Nursery - representing St. Helier parish nurseries)

Ms. V. Payne (Westmount Day Nursery - representing St. Helier parish nurseries)

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence (Chairman):**

I would like to welcome you formally to this hearing of the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. We are conducting a review into the early years education and childcare provision in Jersey and I believe you have seen our terms of reference. As witnesses at this scrutiny hearing you are covered by privilege and you should have seen the information on that. I believe it is in front of you there as well. These microphones are to amplify our voices for the recording so if you can speak into them, please, and try not to hit them, Connétable. We will do some formal introductions so that we know the sound system is working. I am Deputy Mezbourian, Chairman of the panel. To my left ...

**Deputy J. Gallichan of St. Mary:**

I am Juliette Gallichan, Deputy of St. Mary, Vice-Chairman.

**Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier:**

I am Deputy Pitman of St. Helier.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Our officer is Tim. We do have an adviser for this review and she is Dr. Cathy Hamer who will be sitting here when she arrives but unfortunately her plane has been delayed this morning so she will join us shortly. Thank you all for coming to speak to us. What I would like to propose, and I hope it is acceptable to you, is that the 3 of you give us your views, particularly with regard perhaps to the terms

of reference to which we are working. We do have some pre-prepared questions but obviously we will be picking up on what you say to us as well. I think it is probably best if you speak. If we really feel that we need to interrupt and ask something we will do, otherwise perhaps we will have a question session at the end. Is that acceptable to you?

**Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:**

That is great.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

I will let you decide who wants to start.

**The Connétable of St. Helier:**

I have been elected to introduce our submission. I will just introduce Janice Baker who is the manager of the Avranches Day Nursery and Val Payne who is the manager of Westmount Day Nursery. The parish of St. Helier runs 2 day nurseries, mainly for residents of St. Helier but in order to make the nurseries move towards self funding we also take other parents from other parishes but St. Helier residents tend to have first call. The reference to the commercial aspect is relevant to what we are going to be saying later. Obviously one of the things I was concerned about when I took office was that the nurseries were quite a long way from being self funding and it was as we examined the need to make these 2 units pay that certainly I was made aware of the problems that were being created for us and other providers in the private sector by the States policy of free nursery places. I am just going to introduce the topic and then hand over to Val, and I think Janice as well. If I could say also by way of introduction that my first experience of this problem was not as Constable of the parish and effectively the executive, if you like, of the 2 nurseries we run but it was as a parent because the day after my election as Constable we had a baby, my wife and I, and Miriam went into Avranches Day Nursery, really as soon my wife went back to work. So she has been right up through a day nursery up until moving on to school and so as a parent I have an immediate interest. Of course, I no longer have any direct financial interest because nothing was done about the inequitable situation of nurseries while I was a parent. That is a matter that I obviously feel a little sore about, sore and bruised, but it does mean at least that I have no financial interest as a parent in making my comments or indeed in trying to move the matter forward in the States. As Constable of the parish and as an elected Member I have been probing and questioning the current policy of Education, Sport and Culture for several years. Initially, it took me a while to get my head around the topic. It is very complex, as I am sure you are aware. There are not simple solutions and it took me some time to really get my head around the issues. Val and Janice have very much been my mentors in this respect in explaining to me the unintended consequences of what at first sight looks like a very reasonable policy of giving free nursery places to a certain lucky band of the population. Certainly as an elected Member I have been asking questions and the panel will be aware that I successfully amended the Strategic Plan to include the word “equitable” as one of the

prime objectives of this particular ministry that you are scrutinising. It is a matter of regret to me that as we approach the end of the year that strategic objective, unless we are very lucky, looks like it will not be achieved because the Minister was tasked with bringing forward equitable childcare by the end of this year and, as far as I am aware, has not done so at the moment. So that is really where I am coming from. As a parent I have seen at first hand the effect, and indeed I should say the temptation, of the offer of these free places. The fact that Miriam did not have a free place offered to her at Janvrin School ... I think I have confessed this already to Janice, I did apply, and what parent would not. The fees are expensive and the possibility of getting a free place was attractive, albeit it threw up all kinds of problems in terms of what would happen to Miriam before the school started, because it does not start as early as the nursery school run by St. Helier, and what would happen to her after the nursery session finished. Unless we are all going to stop work at 3.00 p.m. or whatever then there are problems in terms of the wrap around care, as I believe it is called and we saw those coming. But quite honestly the financial incentive of getting some free cover - I should not use the word "cover" perhaps but that is as a parent - getting some free nursery care for part of the year, for part of the day, was very strong and so we did apply to Janvrin. I did confess that to you, I think, and she went white when I told her. The reason we were not offered a place was some kind of administrative error. I went back to the school some time later and said: "We have not had our allocation" and they said: "We are not aware of your application" and by then, of course, they had given away the free places in what I can only describe as a lottery and the lucky parents that got the spaces in Miriam's class made whatever adjustments to their personal lives they had to make to get their children in. Miriam, probably to her lasting benefit, stayed in the same environment, very secure, the same people looking after her between 8.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. on whichever day we had to make the different arrangements, absolutely flexible, consistent and continuous, until she moved into her primary school. So probably it was the right thing to do but, as I say, like every other parent on this Island struggling to make ends meet we wanted to see if we could get that extra care. So that is really where I am coming from as a parent and you will know where I am coming from as a politician because I pop up frequently and ask questions of the Minister about why it is taking so long. Just to finish now, I think we all do things as politicians that have one eye on the public and the electorate but the attempt to bring forward this amendment to the Business Plan, preceded as it was by a rally in the Royal Square and the obvious baby kissing opportunities, as a parent made me really very cross. I had been pushing this particular Minister, and previously when he was the president of the committee, to address the inequity issue and to see him grandstanding on having been the provider of equity at long last and then being able to say that people like me who oppose it in the States are not worth talking to, I found that really did stick in my craw because, as I attempted to explain in the Business Plan debate, to offer 20 hours a week to everybody, while the lucky few are still enjoying 30 hours a week, is not equity, nor does it address the fundamental problems that are thrown up by a system where, as I mentioned with my own children, you have to make very complicated child care arrangements in order to profit from the current offer by E.S.C. (Education, Sport and Culture). So I do feel, both politically and personally, that the situation has not been well handled by the department and I

wish you every success in coming forward with proposals that will address equity and at least for a new cohort of parents with young children will ensure a level playing field. So that is my contribution. Over to Val.

**Ms. V. Payne (Westmount Day Nursery):**

What I wanted to add is that Janice and I are probably some of the few people that have been on the journey with education. I was part of setting up one of the nursery classes at Le Squez School, as was; it is now Samares. So we have been on the whole journey, right from day one. I moved from Le Squez School to work for the parish and I can see what has happened, I can see how the policies have changed and what has happened. When I helped to set up Le Squez School they were never meant to be full-time places. They were set up as part-time places to give children an experience before they went to school so they had a settling-in time, really, and the children did come for 5 mornings or 5 afternoons. Where things have changed is where E.S.C. have changed their policy as they have gone along. That is what has had the knock-on effect on to the private sector. I think that some of the changes that they have made, particularly through the training and the ratios and these things, have been made in the best interests of the children. So we do not personally have a problem with that because anything that is good for the children, this is what we are here for. I think the policies that have been made that are in the best interests of the adults is where it has gone wrong and I do not think they have thought those through properly before they have made them. The policies in the best interests of the children, which were made through day care registration, were made in consultation with the providers. The other changes that were made were made without consultation. The 2 that I can think of: in 1998 they changed the schools admission policy. That had a big effect on day nurseries because they decided to take all the children in in September and that means now that we take all our children in in September, so if your baby is not born at the right time of year then you do not get a nursery place anywhere. Then in 2003 they changed the part-time places in the nursery classes to full-time places and that again had a knock-on effect on us as well. Those 2 changes were made without consultation with the private sector and I think all of the changes have had financial implications over the past 16, 17 years now, it has been changing. I think it is interesting to note that the first change, day-care registration, comes under the Lifelong Learning Division of Education but the other 2 changes were made by the Schools and Colleges Division. So you have got a division immediately for 3 and 4 year-olds because we are registered under the Lifelong Learning Division and the nursery classes are under the Schools and Colleges Division, which again has a knock-on effect. Do you want to add anything to that, Janice?

**Ms. J. Baker (Avranches Day Nursery):**

I would just like to say that I feel that Education have changed their policies not always in the best interests of the children but in the interests of having to fill either their schools or their nursery classes. One of the reasons the nursery classes went full-time is because the parents were not taking up the offer of the afternoons and they could not be seen to have empty classes. If you go back a long while ago,

because I do go back a long while ago, children did not go to school until much later and then there was a slump in the birth rate and they had empty classes so they decided to take the children in younger, so now they go to school when they are 4 and not even 5 or 6 when I first came. The nursery classes at one time were only taking children at 3½ and now it has gone down to 3. I think that they are not doing this in the best interests of the children; it is in the interests of keeping, if you like, the taxpayer happy by keeping the classes full. I think because there is no continuity of care that is not in the best interests of the children to have wrap around care or to send them to nursery classes when they are not even going to go to that school. I do not think a school is the right environment for these very young children. If you look traditionally at England, their nursery classes are attached to a school and the children went there when they were 4 years old or 4½ years old, nursery schools were in a completely different building and they took the 3 to 5s. So we are not even getting that right, I do not think. That is my opinion, anyway.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Thank all of you for giving us your thoughts on this. Has anyone picked up any questions that they would like to ask on what we have just heard?

**Deputy S. Pitman:**

Yes, just a couple of things. Firstly, how much do the parish nurseries charge?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

For the 3 and 4 year-olds?

**Deputy S. Pitman:**

Yes.

**Ms. V. Payne:**

£3.75 an hour.

**Deputy S. Pitman:**

It was mentioned that you charge because you want people outside of St. Helier to come and use the nurseries. Is that a different charge or is that the same?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

No, it is the same charge.

**Ms. J. Baker:**

Our 2 year-olds are £4.80 and our babies are £5.70. If you do a very quick equation, the staff ratio is one member of staff and 3 babies. So for one hour you are going to get about £16-something. If you

look at the ratio of the 3 to 5s it is one to 8. So if you are charging £3.75 you are going to get about £30 an hour, for the babies you are going to get £16, and out of that you have to pay your staff costs when your staff are away or when they are on holiday, your cleaners, everything has to come out of those charges.

**The Connétable of St. Helier:**

Could I just add on the subject of the funding. We have the discussion every year about the raising of the fees and certainly in recent years the fee rises have almost exclusively been gobbled up by staff costs. The parish is effectively subsidising its nurseries, I think to the tune of certainly tens of thousands - it has been between £30,000 and £60,000 a year - and that is really because all of the money we take in in fees is going to pay the staff. The other costs are being met really by the goodness of the ratepayers.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Hello, good morning. I would just like to introduce you to Dr. Cathy Hamer who is our adviser. I would ask her just to give a few words of introduction, if I may please.

**Dr. C. Hamer (Panel Adviser):**

Yes, certainly. I am an early years teacher and educational health psychologist, specialising in early years, and working with the Early Childhood Unit, National Children's Bureau.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Thank you. Connétable, have you finished speaking?

**The Connétable of St. Helier:**

Yes. It was just really to emphasise the fact that the commercial aspect of both the parish and the private sector nurseries has meant that the States policy of really taking out, as Janice has just said, the older children, the 3 year-olds, tend to subsidise the younger because it is so expensive to look after the younger ones. So by making that appeal to 3 year-olds to transfer to free spaces makes the job of the parish in balancing the books that much harder.

**The Deputy of St. Mary:**

This is a question raised by things that you said, Connétable, and also you, Ms. Baker. On the one hand in your experience your daughter was at the nursery all the time leading up to school, so I am just wondering whether she found the move to school was more stressful. Of course, I appreciate the fact of what you said, Ms. Baker, is that quite often the children are not placed in free nurseries of the school they go to anyway. I am really concerned about what is good for the children in this environment. Do you have any comments on either scenario?

**Ms. J. Baker:**

I think Miriam settled into school really well and I still think that these children are such very young children to have so many changes in their life. If they were to be going to the same school it would not be quite so bad but the fact that they might leave our nursery and then go to a school nursery and then go a different school I just think that it is so inconsistent, plus the wrap around care that is given. You have got very, very young children here. Normally what happens, to be honest, is they just find somebody to look after them. On a very slightly different note, I had a parent of a baby give her notice in and she was now going to have to pay £100 a month in fees and she met the person that was going to look after her baby in a pub on a Saturday night.

**The Connétable of St. Helier:**

I think one of the selling points of the current policy by the Department is that the children, or some of them, are in a nursery attached to their primary school so they will have a seamless transition and I think there is some merit in that. But what one has to balance, I think, as Janice has alluded to, the other insecurity and discontinuity that is affecting those children's lives, even if they are in the same nursery, that there is going to be the wrap around arrangements, they are going to be with so and so in the morning and then with somebody else in the afternoon that was met in the pub, school holidays; a huge amount of juggling for parents. For me the great thing as a parent of a children at Avranches is that it is so flexible. If I want to make an adjustment, say I find I can get Mondays off, for next term I will say to Janice: "I am going to have Mondays off. I want to spend more time with Miriam" and so I will not pay for Monday mornings and she will put somebody else in that space. I could not have done that if she had gone to the place that I was trying to get for her in the States sector. In terms of the move to primary school, by the time they have gone, as in Miriam's case, from 6 months to the age when she moved ... I cannot remember now, because I have had so many children, what she was.

**Ms. J. Baker:**

Four years and 9 months.

**The Connétable of St. Helier:**

Four, okay. By the time she moved she had clearly outgrown nursery. She had gone from the very bottom to the very top and fantastic continuity and there had not been any other arrangements thrown at her to confuse things. Occasionally other members of the family might do a collection if I was tied up but basically absolutely secure environment for her, and the excitement. I used to hear the children talking about it: "I am going to Helvetia" or "I am going to J.C.G. (Jersey College for Girls)." It is the time when they move to primary school and it is a big step for them, of course, but I would not say it is traumatic.

**Ms. V. Payne:**

Can I just add, I think when a child is 4½ the experience is very different to that of a child of just 3. I do have concerns about children that are 3 in August and start the nursery class the first week in September. We have had quite a few of those who have found it a tremendously difficult transition, even though we try and work with the schools to help children. Regardless of whether they are going to a nursery class or to school, we do try and work with them to ease the transition. I know that we have had cases where the school has come back to us and said: “We are really concerned about this child. They have not settled, they are very unhappy.” What we try and do then is ease it for that child and work with the school to make that transition better because it is not the child’s fault, the parents have made a decision on finance. So we do work with the schools. We do not just send them off and that is it. We do work with the schools to try and make these transitions good for the children.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

I would like to pick up, Ms. Payne, if I may on a couple of points that you made which was that policies have changed and I immediately wrote down “When?” and I think you then answered my question by saying that they changed the admission policy in 1998 and part-time to full-time in 2003. My question really is, was there any consultation before those changes were made from E.S.C.?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

I can tell you what happened. The Jersey Child Care Trust was run by Barbara Wallace in those days and we read about them in the newspaper and then Barbara Wallace called a meeting to which all the providers came to and Tom McKeon came. This happened certainly for the 1998, the Schools Admission policy, and I think they happened again in the Nursery Class Policy, if I remember rightly, but it was after the event, after they had made their decision. We talked to Tom McKeon at great length and to Yasmine Thebault but their decision had been made. It was too late to change it.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Do you know whether it had been made in consultation with other private providers or in ...

**Ms. V. Payne:**

No, this was all the providers came together afterwards. In fact probably in the nursery we have the original minutes of those meetings.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

I wonder if I could ask, because you are regarded as parish providers, obviously you are in the private sector. Are you treated the same as the standard private providers?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

Exactly the same, yes.



**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

A general question. I wonder why the parish set the nurseries up in the first place?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

They set them up to help young mothers that were on welfare, because they were called Welfare then, to get back into the work force. That was their main reason for setting them up.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

I do not know if I have a follow-up to that, because we spoke to the E.D.D. (Economic Development Department) Minister a week or so ago about encouraging local people back into the workforce in order to cut down in some ways on unnecessary migration. I wonder if, as a nursery, you have any contact at all with the Economic Development Department? Do they come to you to see whether anybody wants to go back into work, or if they have problems finding work at all?

**Ms. J. Baker:**

No, because it has mainly come from what was the Welfare Department.

**Ms. V. Payne:**

We do get some from Children's Services. It is mostly through parents putting their name on a waiting list.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

To have a place at your nursery? Just on a general note can you tell us, please, do you have full and part-time places and what your hours are?

**Ms. J. Baker:**

They can contract any hours between the hours that we are open. So, for instance, if they want to start at 8.00 a.m. that is when they are charged from; if they want to start at 8.30 a.m., 9.00 a.m. and again in the afternoons. That works really well, especially with the babies because often a mother will have to go back to work full-time because that is what she left her maternity leave on, which is a different issue I know, but anyway, if you talk to them and perhaps their employer might let them have just half an hour for lunch or dad might finish on a Friday afternoon. So therefore they can contract for that and the parent can come and pick up the baby earlier, which is good obviously for the baby and for the parents.

**Ms. V. Payne:**

We do not have set sessions like some nurseries do. We have flexi hours.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

So what is the latest that anyone can stay with you?

**Ms. J. Baker:**

5.45 p.m.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

What is the capacity for part-time and full-time provision?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

We accommodate the parents' working needs and if there is perhaps a Wednesday morning left there are parents on the list who just want one or 2 mornings, so we would then contact a parent. We do our best to keep the nursery as full as we can.

**Deputy S. Pitman:**

What is the age range that you cater for?

**Ms. J. Baker:**

I take 3 months until they go to school.

**Ms. V. Payne:**

I take 2 to school age.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

I have some more questions which I think I picked up on. Ms. Payne, when you mentioned about the change of policies, I think particularly the one when the admission policy changed to September and you said you had to change to conform to that, really, do you think it is a settled situation now, or could you see perhaps it being beneficial to change back to the old system? If you could explain the old system as well, please.

**Ms. V. Payne:**

The law is still the same. The law has not changed. Children do not have to go to school until the term in which they are 5. That law has never changed. Originally, most children either came in in September and then January. Occasionally there would be a parent who would choose their child to go after Easter, for the summer term. That was quite unusual for that to happen, but a few parents did take that option. So, we were taking so many children in September and then some more would leave in January and we would replace those children in January so we had a rolling session, as it were. But now they are all going in September, and particularly in Westmount's case where they have to be 2 before they can start,

we get all these children in in September and last year we lost 42 children at Westmount. Well, to take 42 new children into a nursery it is very unsettling for the children that are left behind. It is also a massive amount of children. I cannot take 42 in in the first week of September. Those children would never settle. We only take 2 children in a week, so we try and settle them in. That has a financial effect, because some children are still coming in towards the end of September, so that in itself, to lose so many children and to replace so many children, is not good for the nursery. I think the reason that schools did it was to get ... I think they feel socially for the children it is better that they all come in in September. I think they feel as though it is a more cohesive group. Whether that is best for the children, that is debatable, because a lot of research says it is not good for the summer-born babies to be in school so young. But for every piece of research you get saying they should not you will get another one saying that they should, so I cannot argue for the Schools Policy. I just know the effects it has on us. It was better for us when it was just a few at a time, not a mass exodus of children.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

If it was proven that it was better for the children to come in in these staggered groups, would you prefer to see a change back?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

I think personally yes, I would.

**Ms. J. Baker:**

I would as well.

**Ms. V. Payne:**

It is also very hard on your staff when they get in a whole new group of children. For the younger ones it is one to 4, so you have 4 new ones, but the older ones you have 8 new children and it is not just the children you are settling in, the parents have to feel confident with you. You do not just put them in the door; you have to build up a relationship with parents when you are looking after their children, and all that takes time. It does not happen overnight.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

You mentioned the fact that you heard it first of all through the media and then you had a meeting with Tom McKeon and Yasmine Thebault. When policies change do you ever get anything in writing?

**Ms. J. Baker:**

No. I can just read you though ...

**Ms. V. Payne:**

We do now, but we did not then.

**Ms. J. Baker:**

I can just read you, this is the minutes of the meeting and it says: “Why were not childcare providers consulted and informed about the policy change beforehand? Some felt embarrassed that they knew nothing about it until parents told them. Tom acknowledged the importance of early discussion and feedback in future when educational policies are likely to have an impact on private nurseries and play groups. One of the purposes of the current meeting is to improve communication channels.”

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

When was that?

**Ms. J. Baker:**

This was 1999.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Has it been improved, do you think?

**Ms. J. Baker:**

No.

**Ms. V. Payne:**

It started to improve, did it not? When we set up the Jersey Early Years Association we did build up a partnership with Education with the Parents Action Group and I am trying to think who else was on it. That was working quite well and then Mario Lundy finished the partnership because the new government was coming in and he thought it was best to close it down and when the Council of Ministers was reinstated, as it were, the new government, that that would be a time to review it then.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Has it been reviewed, are you aware?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

We are working on it. J.E.Y.A. (Jersey Early Years Association) are working on it. I have 2 hats. We are working on it. We are trying to convince Mike Nighbridge(?) it is a good way forward.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

I wonder if we can bring our adviser in here, because she has picked up on a few questions.

**Dr. C. Hamer:**

You very briefly referred to children who I think you said were funded by Children's Services. Is that right? Can you just explain a little bit about the background to that?

**Ms. J. Baker:**

I think that Social Services sometimes have some children that they think would benefit from nurseries and because I think that parish nurseries have been in existence for quite a long while, although they do use other nurseries, do not get me wrong, that is where it started from. So nowadays they would ring up and say that they have a child who they think would benefit from some nursery provision and if we have a place they come and have a look at it and then we take them in. Then the Children's Services fund that place. They did at one time try to take ... no, they did. They took a 3 year-old, when the child was 3, and sent them to a nursery class because they could not afford it, and I then said I would not take any more children unless they stayed all the way through, because these children are coming from quite disturbed backgrounds sometimes and to put them in my nursery, say, for 6 months, I could see the financial implications but it is not good policy for that child. So now they do tend to leave them.

**Ms. V. Payne:**

We also have assisted places from the Child Care Trust as well, they will phone through and ask us if we will take children for an experience before they start school, the ones that have not been allocated a nursery class place, so they usually fund a maximum of 15 hours a week.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Can you describe your relationship with the J.C.C.T. (Jersey Child Care Trust)?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

I think the parish has quite a good relationship with the trust, does it not, really?

**Ms. J. Baker:**

I think there were a few teething problems. I think when this started about 5 years ago a lot of people felt there was not support from the Jersey Child Care Trust because one of their remits was to provide or help to provide affordable childcare and a lot of people at the time felt there was no help there. That has now changed. They are now being much more active than what they were before.

**Ms. V. Payne:**

I think from the trust point of view, having been around since the start of that as well, we have had 3 totally different types of management of the trust as well. We had Barbara Wallace who was very proactive in getting people around the table, and I think she did a tremendous job on that and people were starting to work together, and then she left and then we had Jane McDonald who was a completely

different personality and things changed, did they not, and it was at that point that the trust said: “Well, we cannot help you, we cannot do anything”, and that was when J.E.Y.A. was formed by all the private providers, because the trust had said: “I am sorry, we cannot do anything for you”. Then of course it has changed again. We now have Fiona, who thinks differently again, so the trust is very dependent on the person running it and what their views are.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

What implications does that have for you as a private provider?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

It is very difficult for the trust, is it not? They are funded by Education and yet they are supposed to help the private sector. You are being pulled 2 ways, are you not?

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Do you see a fundamental flaw in the fact that they are government-funded?

**The Connétable of St. Helier:**

Can I just add as well that in the last several years when I have been trying to get some change for the political process I think I am right in saying that the only manager of the trust who contacted me was Barbara Wallace, who wanted to go out and talk to me about the problems that we are seeing. Since then I have had no proactive contact from the trust in terms of saying: “Well, look you are obviously involved both politically and through the parish nurseries and as a parent, what are your thoughts?” So I must say myself I have felt sometimes that supported by my managers and just a couple of States Members who have been interested in this subject that we are out on our own trying to challenge a policy and find out about the policy, so I do not know whether that is their role. Perhaps that is partly the conflict that we are talking about, that they cannot be seen to be biting the hand that feeds them.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Connétable, you said that the parish is funding the nursery. If you suddenly found your budget extremely restricted or reduced, would you have to consider not funding?

**The Connétable of St. Helier:**

I think what a parish assembly could do any July is they could insist that we make the nurseries fully self-funding. That would simply mean putting up the costs to the parents to cover all the ... we are not even covering the direct costs at the moment. We are only covering the salaries, so to cover the direct costs, the opportunity costs of the buildings, the maintenance, repairs, and so on would really push the costs up very high. At the moment the parishioners are happy because of other things to subsidise, effectively, the provision, because most of the users I think are about two-thirds parishioners. So at the

moment I think they are happy with that.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Do you promote yourselves to the St. Helier parishioners as that the nursery is almost exclusively for them?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

We used to be exclusively for parishioners, but when the schools went to the full-time nursery class places we did have spaces then, did we not, and we had to fill them so we took the decision to give parishioners priority but we would open up Island-wide.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Do you actively promote yourself among the parishioners of St. Helier?

**The Connétable of St. Helier:**

You do a very nice brochure, do you not?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

We do brochures, we send out brochures and we are on the trust website, and there is a little bit on ours. It is mostly word of mouth.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

How do your fees compare to the other private providers? Are they similar?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

I think they are similar to Centre Point, because we are non-profit making and Centre Point are, I think, but I think some of the other private providers, they do have to make a profit, do they not, so some of them are dearer than us.

**The Connétable of St. Helier:**

While we are talking about the money, one of the things that has affected both our provision of nursery care and our residential homes, of which we have 3, has been the impact of regulation on what we are doing. I know that both Val and Janice have expressed to me their dismay, and I think it is in their submission to you, that there appear to be double standards in the sense that the States impose regulations on the private sector that they do not appear to be pursuing themselves. When I first started trying to tease out this problem in question time with the Minister, or the president of the day, the Minister would frequently say: "Well, it is different because what I am offering as Minister is education and what you are offering is care." That argument we have certainly heard less of now and I am pleased

about that because I know that managers agree with me that you do not want to send your 3 year-old to school. That is not what you are trying to do. You are trying to provide a much more balanced and appropriate service for them, but it has added to the cost very much and I know that the managers can give you the details that we feel we have to go the extra mile in terms of the inspections that are carried out. It is quite right that we have inspections, but some of the requirements ... and if you have not seen them it is worth seeing the reports that we get from the inspectors, really down to removing the stain in the carpet in the corner of the third room. We are really taken to the cleaners, excuse the pun, and the question really is, is there a level playing field in terms of regulation?

**Ms. J. Baker:**

Can I just jump in there because if you go on about the ratios, the ratios in the nursery classes is one to 10 and in our nursery it would be one to 8. The reason, and it is in here as well, that Education gave for that was the fact that the children were only there on a part-time basis and they had a teacher. Now that has changed. The children are not there on a part-time basis. Yes, they still do have a teacher but that has changed, but they have not readjusted their ratios accordingly.

**Ms. V. Payne:**

What they have done, they have taken an extra child in every nursery class this year, so in fact it is one to 10.5, is it not, or one to 10.3 because they have taken on an extra child, so there are 31 in the nursery classes instead of 30. I think also that one of the things that should be pointed out is Education's policy, when looking at training, because the private sector has invested heavily in training over the past 18 years. I can speak for my nursery and every member of my staff is qualified in childcare. I do not have anybody that does not have childcare qualifications, but Education's policy was that we should undertake specific trainings and the person running the nursery should take a management qualification, a level 4 in management minimum, and so we went along with that. We agreed and we have gone along and the managers of the day nurseries are trained to level 4 in management. Had they said to us: "You have to have a graduate to lead the nurseries", that is the way we would have gone. We have complied with policy throughout. So I think it is a very weak argument to say: "Well, our nursery classes have a teacher and yours do not." We have a teacher that can be called upon, who is employed by Education, I believe, but seconded to the trust, Foundation Stage teacher. Well, the lady that they employed for that role, I set up Le Squez with and she is not a graduate. In her day and my day, people went to teacher training college. They were not graduates, so there seems to be this terrible confusion about should they be graduate-led. Are they teachers? A lot of the teachers in the nursery classes are not nursery trained. They have come down.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

They have come down from another class?



**Ms. V. Payne:**

Well, we should not say “come down”, because I think they are going to the better end of the school. But do you know something, they may be primary trained. I know of a geography teacher that went from secondary school to a primary school and then went into the nursery for a while. They are not there now but the arguments do not stand up, to me. We are doing everything we are told by Education’s policy and the parish I know we have followed it 100 per cent, done exactly as they have asked, trained our staff completely to their requirements and they do not do the same themselves, and they have 2 different sets of policy. But I think that is because of the division. One is under Lifelong Learning and one is under School Psychology and I think we need to bring them a bit closer together.

**Ms. J. Baker:**

What they do not understand as well we have to have all our staff trained, first aid, et cetera, et cetera, all the way through. When this training became compulsory we lost funding from T.E.P. (Training Employment Partnership). That is how I understand it. Well, why? That was another rug that was pulled out from underneath us, because the training is very, very expensive and we suddenly lost our training budget.

**Ms. V. Payne:**

Particularly the management training.

**Dr. C. Hamer:**

Can I just check, do you have any difficulties in terms of obtaining the qualifications of staff or is that training available?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

Yes, it is available through Highlands College. They can either go on a C.C., that is a 1year course in Child Care and Education, or there is a D.C. which is a 2-year full-time or you can go through the N.V.Q. (National Vocational Qualification) 2 or 3 route, so there are trainings available.

**Dr. C. Hamer:**

The level 4?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

Level 4 is done through the Jersey Business School but that is very expensive. We were looking because ours was funded through T.E.P., but the T.E.P. have pulled that out, so ... but I think it is in the region of £2,000 now to change somebody to a level 4, which is a lot of money for a private provider to find.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

As far as E.S.C. is concerned, do they give you any funding towards training?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

We have had funding in the past. We received the T.E.P. funding, and with N.V.Q. assessors we trained up our own assessors so that we can do our own assessments. You can have a peripatetic assessor but it is more expensive than having a work-based assessor.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

With the J.C.C.T. (Jersey Child Care Trust) being the financial arm perhaps of E.S.C. do they help with training and support you?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

They do H.I.V. (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) A.I.D.S (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) do they not, and they charge £7.50 which is very reasonable. We do not have a problem paying that. We get child protection training which we have paid for, is that about £30, and then we have first aid which has to be renewed every 3 years which is the dearest. That is £85.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

But you do not receive any grant aid now that T.E.P. has stopped?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

No, not now that T.E.P. has gone. I think it is very difficult for any private provider if, say, Janice or I left. £2,000 is a lot of money to train up a new manager.

**Ms. J. Baker:**

I have 26 staff so you can imagine first aid is being paid out all of the time, because I am continuously having to renew it.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Do you have any contact from support services apart from perhaps E.S.C.? I am thinking in terms of Health and Social Services or Social Security? Is there any communication?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

We do have the childcare allowance system in place but of course the threshold on that has not changed in years so there are very few people that get a childcare allowance.

**Ms. J. Baker:**

My nursery at one time on the books was about 30 people receiving the allowance and now I think I have 5 or 6.

**Dr. C. Hamer:**

Do you have any support for individual children? For example, if you have a child with a disability or a child with particular needs, what would happen then?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

We can apply to the trust for some help and the help they give is usually they will put somebody in 2 or 3 hours a day. It depends on the child's needs. They have just allocated some funding through one of our children for 2 hours a day, but finding a person that will come in for that 2 hours a day is extremely difficult. They will help for that. They will not help with nursery fees, that parent, but they will help for an extra pair of hands.

**Ms. J. Baker:**

Which sometimes causes difficulties because sometimes you might have a child who needs to come to a nursery for specific reasons and if the parent is not working she cannot afford to pay the fees. We are at the moment trying to help a child with learning difficulties because the mother herself does not go to work and cannot afford the fees for this child, so we are applying to a charity for it.

**Dr. C. Hamer:**

So if you had a child who had speech and language difficulties, would you be likely to get a speech and language therapist?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

We can refer children to speech and language.

**Dr. C. Hamer:**

Right, and to educational psychology?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

Yes. We can access those services.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Can I ask, Connétable, you mentioned in your presentation the amendment to the business plan that was taken to the House by Senator Vibert, but how would you see this provision if it was funded impacting upon yourselves? Has there been any dialogue between the department over the years?

**The Connétable of St. Helier:**

There certainly has not been to me. I do not know whether you were involved in the proposal that the Minister brought forward. He certainly did not contact me about it. The first I knew about it was when I read about the amendment in the paper and there is no reference in the amendment or the report accompanying it to the history of the campaign to get equity.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Are you aware that in fact he envisages a public/private partnership if the funding was available? Our understanding is that parents would be able to choose where they placed their children.

**The Connétable of St. Helier:**

I do not think it was wholly without merit and I think that is probably why J.C.C.T. gave it their backing and asked States members to support it. But I think, as I say, it did not really address some of the fundamental problems, particularly the issue of equity and the unintended consequences of a policy which effectively pulls children out of nursery at a stage when it is not the best time for them to go. So in terms of coming up with a solution, and certainly what is put in the submission is that a level playing field is to offer all parents access to the same financial assistance, so how they choose to spend that money or how they choose to spend that 20 hours is up to them, on their personal needs, but there should not be a group who is still accessing it for 30 hours a week as well as a group ... because inevitably then the Minister has to go to the States and the taxpayer and ask for more money, because the money he has at the moment is not being used efficiently or fairly.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

If the funding was found for all 3 and 4 year-olds to have this 20 hours, would you have capacity within your nurseries to take on extra children?

**Ms. J. Baker:**

Yes.

**Ms. V. Payne:**

The children at the moment are being accommodated but there are children out there who do not have a nursery place because the parents simply cannot afford to pay. This is where the trust has picked up some of these children through the supported places.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

My understanding of the policy of the 30 hours is that we hear about it not being equitable because parents who could well afford to pay for nursery provision obtain places at the primary school nurseries, but the theory behind that is that all children are then mixing with others from the entire social

spectrum. Do you have any comments on that policy?

**Ms. J. Baker:**

I agree with that. I think it should be.

**Ms. V. Payne:**

I do not think that they have an easy task when giving out the places, because I think the forms that they fill in do not give them enough information either, but the parents have to decide what they want to put on the forms as well, do they not? So I do not think it is an easy task when they are doing the allocations.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

How do you think the forms could be improved?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

At the end of the day it is whether the parents will give the information on the form that is required anyway, so I do not know how you quite get round that one.

**The Connétable of St. Helier:**

It is clearly a question, and it was raised during the debate, that there are some parents accessing free places who can well afford to pay for them. This does not sound like sensible use of funds, and it was suggested to me that we are currently putting in place, hopefully, the finishing touches to an income support system, which will hopefully be able to assess people's needs. The question I put to the Minister and his chief officer when we last met to talk about income support, our last meeting before the debate, was: "Could your system accommodate payment for nursery care? Could that be a component in the income support system?", and he said: "Absolutely. The system is designed to deal with components. We have the housing component and all sorts of other components." It was very much left that they would be willing to be approached, or Employment and Social Security would be willing to be approached, about including effectively means testing so that you would not have parents accessing free places who could afford it. That would mean there is more money to go around to make sure that everybody can access their 20 hours.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

I think the counter argument to that is that then if you take those children out you do not have the wide spectrum of society within the nursery class.

**The Connétable of St. Helier:**

I do not think you would come out; I think simply you would pay. If you could afford the space and you

want your child in that nursery school, hopefully it is going to be next to the primary school, you would pay for your child to go to the school, so you would still get the mix.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

I think I misunderstood what you were saying there.

**The Deputy of St. Mary:**

I think I may have misunderstood. Can I just go back to something you said, Ms. Baker, about the fact that if you had a disabled child, you would be given funding for a specialist teacher for so many hours a week, perhaps, but that the parents would not have any access to the funds to pay for the attendance. Does this mean that we are missing out a group of children here? Disadvantaging?

**Ms. J. Baker:**

I think we are.

**The Deputy of St. Mary:**

It is not that they are being taken up somewhere else in the public sector?

**Ms. J. Baker:**

No. In the past we have always had to apply to charities, different charities for funding a child.

**The Deputy of St. Mary:**

So it could be that we are having a section of the community who are not being addressed under the terms of reference. Thank you for clarifying that.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Do you feel that there is a cohesive and well communicated strategy for the nought to 5 year-olds being led by E.S.C.?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

No, because nought to 3s were added on as an afterthought. There is no strategy. It is not cohesive. It is the sticking plaster approach. Unfortunately we are only 45 square miles and I really think we should be getting this right.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Can I ask, Ms. Payne, you said that you have been in this for quite a long time and you spoke about the journey. Can you tell us when you went into nursery care and education?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

I have been in it ever since I have been in Jersey but I have been working with children since I was 16, and I will not tell you how old I am now, but it is a long time.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

So over here?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

I have been here 35 years and I have been working in childcare for 35 years.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Yasmine Thebault came to speak to us recently and I think she came over in 1983 as the Early Years Co-ordinator.

**Ms. V. Payne:**

She did not come in as the Early Years Co-Ordinator. When I met Yasmine I was working at Le Squez nursery and Jane Farley had employed me at that time and when Jane returned to live in England Yasmine applied for Jane's post. I can remember.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

That is why I am trying to get all this information from you. What happened then, when Ms. Thebault arrived? Do you know what her remit was?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

When Ms. Thebault took over she had -- there was Grands Vaux nursery class, Rouge Bouillon and Le Squez that were already open and then others started to open after that and if I remember rightly she also was responsible for the registration of the day nurseries and the child minders, as they were in that day. She had Dr. Sandra Mountford who worked with her and then they split the post into 2.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Can I ask what the age range was that she was dealing with at that time?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

It would have been nought to 5 originally. Then Yasmine became Early Years Adviser for Education and Sandra Mountford took over the day care registration. That would have been about 1989.

**Ms. J. Baker:**

They split the post, that is what happened, because as they were adding more and more nursery schools

it was felt that there would be more work, so therefore they split it.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

During all that time you are not aware of there being one strategy for childcare or children nought to 5?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

Not as far as I know.

**Dr. C. Hamer:**

Can I just ask, and you may have already covered this in which case I apologise, but in terms of the Foundation Stage my understanding is that you work with the Foundation Stage curriculum. Do you work with the Birth to Three framework for younger children?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

Yes, we do. The Birth to Three Matters framework was introduced to Jersey by Peter Arthur who was fundamental in setting it up, so we had our training in Birth to Three with Peter Arthur, so we were sort of the pilot scheme for it, really. Avranche Day Nurseries worked very closely.

**Ms. J. Baker:**

He came and did a lot of workshops with the staff in the nursery itself.

**Dr. C. Hamer:**

Are there any plans to move on to the Early Years Foundation Stage?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

Not at this moment in time, no. I think they are going to wait and see what happens in England first.

**Ms. J. Baker:**

When you get it sorted out they will bring it over here.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Can I ask, are you aware of the Critical Skills Programme that Education deliver?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

We have undertaken that programme.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Is that because Education approached you?



**Ms. V. Payne:**

That was organised through the peripatetic Foundation Stage teacher who is employed by the trust. We had heard that education were running this and I think it was me that asked were we going to get any of this training, but what was interesting was when we went on the course we had been using critical skills all along but in a different format.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Under a different name. Thank you. Well, thank you very much for your time. I think we have probably covered most of the questions that we had and have certainly received a lot of information from you. The format that we take for our review is that we will be producing as soon as possible a draft report which will be sent to everyone who has contributed by means of perhaps using quotes from what you have said to us today, and we would ask you to check that they are correct. Before that, however, we will be sending you a transcript of today's hearing. I think I overlooked telling you at the beginning that it was being recorded and may be uploaded to the website, the scrutiny website, but you will receive a transcript to check and make sure that what you said is correctly recorded on the transcript.

**Ms. V. Payne:**

Can I just add something? I do not know if you are aware but Dr. Sandra Mountford gained her thesis by writing up the journey, the collaborative approach journey from 1989 until 2004, so much of the information that you would require would be in her thesis.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

Thank you. I think it was J.E.Y.A. who referred us to that initially. We were not aware of it.

**Ms. V. Payne:**

I have read it, because I have just completed a master's and I used a lot of her research for my master's.

**Dr. C. Hamer:**

What did you do your master's on?

**Ms. V. Payne:**

It was Sheffield University Early Childhood Education but I did it on free play. My dissertation is on free play and it is being moderated tomorrow, so I am a nervous wreck today.

**Dr. C. Hamer:**

It will be fine.

**Ms. V. Payne:**

I will know by the end of the week, that is for sure.

**Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:**

I would like to thank you for coming and giving us your time today. We much appreciate it.