

Dear Deputy Bryans

I write having seen the announcement last week of the scrapping of free 20 hours nursery care for those who earn over £75,000 pa in private nursery care. My wife and I have three children, one of 7, one of 3 and one of 4 months. We both are locally born, educated to Masters degree standards and work as professionals in the Heritage profession. During your time as Director of ESC you have worked closely with heritage organisations and must appreciate that they are not the highest earning jobs. However, we are going to be around the threshold of £75,000 as I'm sure many other middle income families will be. We own a property on which we are paying a hefty mortgage along with all other expenses that are incumbent on a young family and pay all of our taxes and social security due.

I understand that these are our choices but I mention to illustrate that we give into the system and yet receive relatively few benefits compared to other parts of our society. I have a number of questions and concerns around the decision which have motivated me to write this email.

1. Average wages in the Island are said to be approximately £35,000. This means the figure of £75,000 is low when looked at in this context.
2. This cut is being imposed in order to save £200,000pa from the budget. This decision is extremely alienating to say the least when seeing how much money is being spent/wasted on various States projects and consultant fees.
3. This decision is at its core sexist. On hearing the announcement, which at first glance seemed to cover both public and private nurseries, my wife's first reaction was that maybe she could work less hours to look after the boys and then we would remain eligible. Is this really something we want to encourage? Women who have gone back to work either having to drop their hours so as to be under the £75,000 threshold or in order to look after their children because they can't afford childcare. Inevitably it will be women who are affected the most.
4. The fact that the change covers private nursery care means that there is going to be much more of a demand for the school nurseries. Will those who are not eligible for the 20 free hours be given priority for these places knowing that others can get support elsewhere? It seems to be that private nurseries without this support are going to potentially go out of business and then there is going to be less choice for parents. Also it has been proven that time at nursery is good for children to learn how to socialise. Any efforts to curb this are surely to be discouraged?
5. This decision was made without any consultation or discussion with stakeholders. It was also announced without proper detail meaning people weren't certain if it was starting in 2016 or 2017 or whether it was covering private and school nurseries. This meant more confusion and anger as I'm sure you are aware from various social media platforms. To take this step without talking to those involved feels like another example where the States are not listening to the public.
6. It doesn't think of those families who have planned their children whilst including this benefit in their financial calculations. We have had our children every 3 years or so with the fact that 20 free hour of nursery care was guaranteed. Costs of childcare are a large part of a

monthly salary and we would only be able to afford one child in fee paying nursery. For it now to be taken away is upsetting in the extreme. Opportunities to attempt to start to save money in order to afford possible future education at Victoria College or university will have to, once again, be delayed.

7. How has this figure of 100 families being affected each year been reached? It seems from the strength of feeling expressed from members of the public that this figure may be incorrect.

8. There are not details yet as to how much this threshold is going to increase every year or how it is judged (will children whose parents have divorced be judged on both incomes or if they have remarried on the step parents income as well?) This lack of information is extremely worrying.

In conclusion I want to reiterate that this decision seems extremely problematic to me. It is working to alienate the middle earners who seem to be the people who bear the brunt of taxes, cuts etc across the board in different Departments. I am not normally one to stick my head above the parapet. I've never written to a politician before about an issue despite being politically aware but this has fuelled my disenchantment to such an extent that I felt compelled to write. I hope that you will reconsider this decision.

I await your response.

Kind regards