

STATES OF JERSEY

Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Early Years Review

TUESDAY, 16TH OCTOBER 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 (Advisor to Panel)

Witnesses:

For Jersey Early Years Association:
Mr. M. Farley (Co-Owner, Charlie Farley's Nursery)
Ms. B. Lewis (Managing Trustee, Centre Point Trust)
Mr. T. Brint (Director, Leeward Child Care)

Mr. M. Farley (Co-Owner, Charlie Farley's Nursery):

Just to say Val Payne, who is the Chairman of JEYA (Jersey Early Years Association), obviously sends her apologies. She would normally be here today. So I am afraid you have the "B" team!

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

Thank you. Thank you very much for coming to speak to the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel this morning. Just a bit of housekeeping to start with, if I may. The hearing is being recorded and will be transcribed and eventually uploaded to the Scrutiny website so the information will be in the public domain. When this has been transcribed, a copy will be sent to you all for you to verify that what you have said today is what is shown on the transcript. You will not be able to change any meaning of what you said, but if it is inaccurately recorded then you are able to do that. In front of you, you will find a document that just relates to witness privilege at a Scrutiny hearing and you should have had sight of that earlier. There may not be 3, Mr. Farley, but I think there will be one there certainly for you to be able to see. The microphones are not to amplify our voices; they are there for recording purposes, so when you speak if you can direct yourself towards the microphone, please. Just to test that the recording system is working properly, we will just do some formal introductions, if we may. I am Deputy Deirdre

Mezbourian, Chairman of the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel.

Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier:

Deputy Pitman of St. Helier.

Deputy J. Gallichan of St. Mary:

Deputy Juliette Gallichan of St. Mary.

Dr. C. Hamer:

I am Dr. Cathy Hamer. I am an early years teacher, childhood scientist, health and educational psychologist. I have worked for the department in the UK setting up Surestart programmes and currently work for the Early Childhood Unit, National Children's Bureau.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Could I ask you to introduce yourselves, please?

Ms. B. Lewis (Managing Trustee, Centre Point Trust):

I am Belinda Lewis. I am the Managing Trustee of Centre Point Trust, which is an established charity over here caring for children from 2 years old to 15.

Mr. T. Brint (Director, Leeward Child Care):

My name is Tim Brint. I am Director of Leeward Child Care. We run at Springfield Stadium. I have been a teacher in the Island, States education teacher, for 10 years. We have owned the nursery for 10 years. Two years ago I gained a Master's degree in early education and care.

Mr. M. Farley:

Martin Farley. I am co-owner of Charlie Farley's Nursery with my wife, which has been operating for 17 years. We are unusual in that we have a tripartite arrangement where we have obviously the nursery for parents and employers' contributions towards the business. We have recently started a second nursery called Charlie Farley's Two - T-W-O - and that nursery is aimed at 0 to 3 years of age.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Thank you. On my left is Tim Oldham, Officer. I understand, Mr. Brint, that you are prepared to give us a presentation this morning. Thank you for that because I believe that we did not ask you in advance to come prepared in any way, so if you are happy to do that?

Mr. T. Brint:

Yes, it is more of a short introduction to the issues as we see it at the moment.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Thank you very much. What we were hoping you would do is give us a bit of background about the Jersey Early Years Association and yourselves, your involvement in that. Also, as you have already done a little bit of background about yourself, but please, if you are happy to go ahead ...

Mr. T. Brint:

Okay. About 5 years ago the Education Department started to change their policies with nursery care for 3 and 4-year-olds with the school nurseries. This had an effect on all the private sector nurseries. They started by just having one intake a year, every September, rather than having 2 intakes a year, which affected children and their families and the private sector nurseries. Then they moved to just having full-time places; no part-time places or hardly any part-time places were on offer to families. This had a greater effect on us in the Island. We felt that the Jersey Child Care Trust was not really tackling the issues with all the empathy for the private sector that we would wish them to have, so we gathered together and formed ourselves as an association of all private sector child care owners, managers, workers, called JEYA, Jersey Early Years Association. We are unfunded and we have been brought together by adversity and it has been a strong and very productive link that we have between ourselves. There is a high level of qualification and thinking and experience within our ranks and we have been constantly over the last 5 years trying to work with Education to get a cohesive, equitable early years policy for all 3 and 4-year-olds in the Island. It has been an uphill struggle to say the least, not least the biggest battle has been the impression in the minds of the Education Department that everything in the public sector is poor quality. They fail to realise the level to which the private sector has studied and the content of their courses. Although they are lower than degree courses in general terms - they are QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) level 3 rather than degree level - they are more intensively child care focused than teaching degrees. Teaching degrees, from my experience, tend to be more about subject knowledge and behaviour and behaviour control of children. We have got to the stage now where we would have liked to have more money from the States so as all the children in the Island could have been offered early years education and care for 3 and 4-year-olds. That now is not going to be possible because the States has decided against that. We do firmly believe that the Education Department has all the resources to offer every child in this Island, 3 and 4-year-olds, 15 hours of education and care, which by the States' own research which they have chosen, the EPPI (Evidence for Policy and Practice Information) research, is what is required for maximum benefit for children of that age. Any more hours than 15 hours is good but not necessary. Any less has shown that it does have less of a benefit for the children. The States could easily do this next week by changing all their places back to part-time places. They have approximately 500 places. There are 1,000 children in the Island of that age, so it could offer 500 children places in the morning and 500 children places in the afternoon. They would need no more money from the States. They have all the infrastructure there to do it, but they will not and we are scratching our heads as to why they will not. Their other options are

that they could start charging fees to people who use their nurseries, and presumably one would hope to use that money to protect families who need protection, to give them the free choice of nursery places, because perhaps they cannot afford it or whatever the circumstances may be. But there are an awful lot of families using schools' nurseries who could well afford to pay. The current policy is also damaging to children in that it is encouraging discontinuity. Many families are moving from a settled private sector arrangement where their children are looked after by the same people during the holidays and all day, and they then move to school because the schools offer them a free place where they are looked after by different people at the beginning of the day, the end of the day and school holidays. This sort of discontinuity research clearly shows - and even the States' early years advisor said some years ago - that discontinuity is bad for children. So even by their own admission discontinuity is not good for children, yet it is precisely what their present policy is encouraging. Shall I leave it there? **[Laughter]**

Ms. B. Lewis:

We are heavily regulated by the Education Department.

Mr. M. Farley:

Yes, we are in a strange position where the regulator on one hand is also the competitor that is in the process of either by wit or by accident potentially closing down the private sector. I think Tim was very polite. I think the current arrangement is completely and utterly shambolic. We have parents who can well afford child care blocking places in the public sector for parents who cannot afford it. The evidence is starting to show that the education policy is driving child care underground: unregulated facilities, cash in hand arrangements. We find ourselves where we are today perhaps because of not just the current department but many, many years of lack of strategic thinking. When this whole policy started, it seemed like a great idea. In those days there was plenty of money so roll it out and, of course, what has happened now? The gravy train has stopped. There is not enough cash to continue the capital expenditure required, let alone the revenue costs of a public sector solution to this problem. I think long-windedly to answer your question about why JEYA came out of that mess, I think as we sit here today, we are due tomorrow to have another meeting with Education, Sport and Culture to find out what their plan B is after their drubbing in the States on this issue. JEYA wholeheartedly supported the foundation stage proposal that went to the States. We went through the options privately with Education, Sport and Culture some time ago about means testing and so on and we were unanimous, I think, in the view that it was the best solution. As we sit here today, we find ourselves perhaps on the cusp of having to agree to the least good solution, which would be potentially means testing if, in fact, anything was going to go forward. I could go on but ...

Ms. B. Lewis:

They are very guarded. The department are very guarded about the criteria for entrance to a nursery class. We have managed to fix 2 meetings with them and had those meetings cancelled. We cannot get

any criteria from them about how people access a place in a nursery class.

Mr. M. Farley:

There has been a cultural clash as well over the years between the educational establishment, educational care, educational nursery care and education through play and the private sector's approach to child care. I think one of the good things that has come out of the recent months is that that sort of locking horns on the dogma and the research and what is best has really calmed down to a certain extent and I think certainly both sides have agreed that there are strengths and weaknesses in each other's case and, therefore, we need to find the best way of going forward.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Thank you. That is certainly an insight into how it works from the other side, as it were. I thank you for being as frank as you have been and hope you will continue to be during our discussions, because obviously if we are to prepare a report that has any effect at all we need to deal with the truth, even if it is uncomfortable. Deputy Gallichan?

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I was just going to pick up a couple of little points from the presentation before I lose them. Ms. Lewis, you said that you were heavily regulated. Obviously you are meaning as the private sector?

Ms. B. Lewis:

Yes.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Do you see an imbalance between the regulation in the private sector and what is laid down for the public and can you tell us how that affects the private sector?

Ms. B. Lewis:

Most definitely. We welcome the regulation that we have here because we believe we have a very high quality service to parents and children here. We are regulated every year. We have to put forward a re-registration. With the regulating role comes a developmental role, so the regulator also has to pick up areas of what she perceives are needs for development and she has to develop them, and she does. So we run at a very high level, we think. We do not see any of this impacting -- well, we are not invited to any continuous professional development with the maintain sector apart from perhaps a conference a year they will extend to us. There are differences in adult/child ratios. We work 1:8 for foundation stage; they work 1:10. When we take the children out we have to go right down to 1:4; they do not.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Does that impact heavily on your planning?

Ms. B. Lewis:

Yes.

Mr. M. Farley:

Yes, somewhere in the region of 70 per cent plus of costs are staff costs in this sector, in the private sector.

Mr. T. Brint:

Education are constantly moving the goalposts in this area. They have moved above a ratio of 1 adult to 10 children and they are working towards 1 adult to 11 children. I have had anecdotal evidence that children have been sent home because the staff just cannot cope with that amount of children. When a child presents challenging behaviour there are just not the staff to work on a 1:1 ratio. What we have not included in the ratio of 1:8, the private sector are also required to have supernumerary management, which the schools do not factor in. So, in fact, the ratio is less than 1:8 if you factor in that angle as well. The other thing that is frustrating is that there is some very good research that has been done by Dr. Sandra Mountford, who is on the Education Department's payroll, as to the progression of the private sector over the years. I can give our own opinion as to why they have not included her research and why they do not speak to her, but I am very surprised that she has not been asked along to the panel by the Education Department.

Ms. B. Lewis:

There is also sometimes as much as a year or even over a year's difference in age on intake of the children, and we would not be allowed to do that. Our regulator insists that they work in small groups within their age, not that there can be an intake of just over 3 years old and just over 4 years old in the same 31 children into a class with one teacher.

Mr. M. Farley:

It is a minor point as well, but going back to the staff ratios, because Education require fewer staff and because they then employ their staff on public sector pay scales, that has created a massive imbalance across the employment element of the sector because the private sector staff are more poorly paid in many cases than the public sector staff. Personally, I think there is a fear now that if the educational element is introduced as a regulatory factor into the private sector without due care, then the cost of providing that could be another burden. Now, I mentioned about in our case with the employers, the employers contributing as well as the parents. In a nursery business there are not lots and lots of other revenue streams; there are only the fees that the parents pay. The fees that parents pay in Jersey are extraordinarily high and we all know that. So when I said it was shambolic, it is shambolic in lots of

ways because I think a lot of parents are being not well served because ultimately this policy has been wrong for 15, 20 years.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I wonder if I might ask a question. I spoke earlier about speaking truthfully and being frank. Without meaning any disrespect to your Association, before I came to this review I knew of the Education Department providing child care, I knew there was a private sector provision, but to me, at the forefront of my mind for the private sector is the JCCT (Jersey Child Care Trust). Jersey Early Years Association is something I have come across since starting this review. Mr. Brint, you mentioned that you felt you had to form it because of the disparity between the public and private sector. Could you give us a little more information about your Association and tell us who you represent? Is it all child care providers or just a certain number?

Ms. B. Lewis:

All. I think we can say --

Mr. T. Brint:

It is the entire private sector.

Ms. B. Lewis:

Yes, the entire private sector is behind us.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Do you have a membership?

Mr. T. Brint:

It is an informal membership. Everybody was asked. The way it started was that Jersey Child Care Trust represented a very wide group or had an interest in a very wide group of people: parents and training organisations, et cetera. Education also had the biggest or a large part of control over the Child Care Trust. Right from the start when the Child Care Trust was formed, I was there sort of working with them, trying to promote the private sector case, and it became increasingly hard to the point where they themselves, one of their members, advised us: "You need to start your own body because we cannot represent you adequately." So we wrote to every private provider in the Island asking if they wanted to be a part of this Association and nobody declined and everybody agreed and everybody said that it would be a good thing because the private sector just did not have a voice. This has brought us together with a voice and it is difficult because we have no staff, we just have ourselves and the amount of time that we can give to it, so we tend to work in a committee, passing out information to the other nurseries as we have meetings or as we find out information and they feed into us when they have issues

or questions or things that they wish to put forward. About twice a year, perhaps 3 times a year, we will have a full meeting with as many of the members as can make it.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I am pleased to see that I am thinking along the same lines as Dr. Hamer because my next question was going to be do you represent day carers or is it nursery schools that you represent? Do you have individual --

Ms. B. Lewis:

We do not have nursery schools in Jersey.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

No, I beg your pardon, yes.

Ms. B. Lewis:

We are day care, yes. We have preschools with us, yes.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

So do you have individual child carers, child minders?

Mr. T. Brint:

We do not.

Ms. B. Lewis:

Yes, we do -- well, on JEYA?

Mr. T. Brint:

Not formally. I think --

Ms. B. Lewis:

No, I beg your pardon. No, the representative came to a meeting we had with the politicians. I have been confused. No, we do not.

Mr. T. Brint:

They are not kept out of the loop of information as such, the same with nannies. It is purely because of the amount of time that we have and the resources that we have available.

Mr. M. Farley:

Could I suggest that as a follow-up to this meeting we will get Val Payne to send to you the list of organisations?

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Yes, please.

Mr. M. Farley:

We have met with various members of the Council of Ministers who have been happy with the representation of JEYA, including the Chief Minister on a number of occasions. I think another reason why JEYA came about, in relation to the Jersey Child Care Trust we are not here to fight amongst ourselves in relation to the Child Care Trust versus JEYA, but it was clear if one looks at politics that on at least one occasion in a States cost-cutting exercise it looked like the Jersey Child Care Trust was going to be disbanded. So for a while it certainly did not look like it was going to be around a long time. Now, that does not mean that it has not done some sterling work, and I believe that it has done some sterling work in recent times on GST (Goods and Services Tax), for example. However, it has to be said that the feeling amongst the membership of JEYA, the informal membership of JEYA, was that we could probably, if we stretched ourselves, get a better representation directly - hence like today - than through a third party. Because whatever goes through a third party is invariably filtered and it is much better and we have had much greater success in going straight to the Chief Minister, straight to the Council of Ministers and straight to Scrutiny and the Department rather than working through a third party.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

You speak about working through a third party. Do you feel as if you are pulling in different directions?

Mr. M. Farley:

I think the Jersey Child Care Trust is part of the solution to what we are all searching for. There is a sum of money which the States votes to the Child Care Trust and as you search for a solution, part of the financial solution could be to look at the amount of money that goes to the Child Care Trust and ask yourselves whether that is best spent or whether it could be used more productively in other ways.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

No doubt that is something that we will be --

Mr. M. Farley:

But we are not here to talk about the Child Care Trust.

Ms. B. Lewis:

In fact, there is an Association of Family Day Carers.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Yes.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I would just like to pick up another thing. You mentioned in the introduction that you have been trying to work with Education concerning the 3 to 4-year-old situation. Obviously this will sit hopefully within a 0 to 4 strategy eventually. Have you got any input on the wider aspects of infant care and education?

Ms. B. Lewis:

Well, it was rather thrown in at the eleventh hour, the under-3s. Only this year I think it came in. We felt it rather clouded the water a bit. We wanted to concentrate on the entrance to the nursery classes. We have got views on care for the under-3s but it is totally different because they do not go near the school yet.

Mr. M. Farley:

But that was exactly part of the problem that the whole idea of extending the remit of the Department from 3 to 5s to 0 to 5s was handed down unilaterally. We just picked it up in a letter. No one has formally consulted, I think I am right in saying. In fact, we knew that various officials were walking round and saying that they now were representing 0 to 5s or looking at 0 to 5s, and we picked it up in a JCCT letter, actually. This is an extraordinarily bizarre situation. Can you imagine the finance industry, the States looking to regulate and promote a finance industry without consulting the private sector? Why has it been allowed to happen where every year there are 1,000 children born and it is millions of pounds and it is people's lives? There has been very, very little consultation, if any at all. In our sector, I can speak personally. We have a model where the employer and the parents contribute towards fees. Nobody has ever knocked on the door and said: "Tell me about that."

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

A couple of questions following on from that, Mr. Farley. You have a meeting I think tomorrow with Education. Who requested that meeting?

Mr. T. Brint:

We did.

Mr. M. Farley:

We did.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Do you feel that the consultation that there is between you and Education is always at your request and behest?

Mr. T. Brint:

Generally, yes. Yes, in fact always, I would say.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

So you go to them; they do not approach you?

Mr. T. Brint:

I was going to say having been a teacher and just starting to think of the mechanics of it, we did have a meeting scheduled very soon after Senator Vibert had lost that vote over the £1.5 million in the States. Then that meeting was cancelled because the Director could not make it and cancelled for a week. I do not know if it is a question that you can ask or you can find the minutes or ask to see the minutes, but I am strongly suspecting that a lot of the Education Department's agenda is being driven by the head teachers and that everything is being taken back to them and that there is a strong control coming from teachers, teachers' unions, and it is all about teachers making an industry of education. There is an awful lot of arrogance in the belief that only teachers having that magic teaching qualification have something to offer to young children. Having been a teacher, having done non-teaching degrees as well now, I can say that is simply not the case and it is a position that is really just adopted by the unions, in my opinion, or by the teaching industry to create an industry for themselves.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Another question: do you feel that there is an overall strategy for early years from the Education Department or do you feel it is fragmented?

Mr. M. Farley:

There clearly cannot be an overall strategy because how did the 0 to 3 element that we were talking about a moment ago suddenly get morphed into the equation? No, I think it is make it up as you go along time, quite frankly. It is fire-fighting at the moment as well because obviously there is a financial shortage of money to continue rolling out the facilities attached to primary schools and the ongoing costs of employing the staff. It may be too late, but suddenly the private sector is welcome and I think we are welcome for expediency's sake because we are needed to try and save the situation. I do not think the gulf of the dogma that we were talking about has disappeared; it is just an expedient solution because if we all closed tomorrow what would the Government do?

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Can I just follow up on something that was mentioned earlier about the resources being there? Although the Minister lost the amendment to the Business Plan, you believe that there are resources if they were reallocated to provide the provision for all 3 and 4-year-olds. Is the capacity there to deliver that within the private sector?

Mr. T. Brint:

If the States decide or the Education Department decides that they want every child to have a minimum or the opportunity of a minimum of 20 hours' education and care for 3 and 4-year-olds, they will need to use the private sector because they do not have enough places. However, if the States' Education Department reverted to the position that they used to have where 15 hours would be enough for what is not mandatory education and care anyway, it is something that they are choosing to do, not required to do by law, then they could revert to offering part-time places.

Dr. C. Hamer:

I really just want to check out whether you feel there is capacity in the private sector or whether it would need capital investment?

Mr. M. Farley:

My personal view is that it would need capital investment because whilst a lot of the private sector places are unfilled at the moment for 3 to 4-year-olds, clearly there is not 1,000 places there ready for the 1,000 children. So, in other words, if I understand you correctly, if the public sector were to back out of foundation stage altogether, then I think there would be a huge readjustment needed. Because one of the side issues that has happened through this policy is that many facilities are closed. So the tide came up and closed a lot of the very nice playgroups and a lot of the informal facilities and a number of private sector nurseries have closed their doors as a result.

Ms. B. Lewis:

Centre Point Trust piloted wrap-around care for the States. We still run it. Because we have over 70 per cent of women work in Jersey so at 3.00 p.m. children need somewhere to go, we piloted a service of picking the children up and bringing them to us for care. To date we are still the only provider that does that. It has had a lot of difficulties because we use the facilities at Janvrin School and that has caused the teaching side quite a lot of distress because they feel that their equipment is used in a different way to the way that they use it. Our argument is that it is community equipment, it is bought by the community, but it is a meeting of 2 professions. As we are regulated, we have to have a mixture of early years workers and play workers. It is a different doctrine to the teacher and so that has had a lot of difficulty. We have ironed out most of the problems. We work well with them, but we have a capacity for 50 children of which we run full capacity in the holidays for that. We are about 35, 40 children after school in the foundation stage, but is mainly town schools. We can only service the town schools.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

We are talking about capacity. My understanding from the hearing that we had yesterday with the Education Minister is that had funding been awarded to him to introduce this new policy of 20 hours for all 3 to 4-year-olds there would have been capacity for delivery of that within a public and private sector partnership. I think that is what we are trying to establish from you, whether you believe that there is a capacity there to do that?

Ms. B. Lewis:

I think the combined sectors do support the community, yes. I think there would be support for the community.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

So his assertion you are saying would be correct, that he could deliver if he had the funding? He could deliver this?

Mr. T. Brint:

He could deliver the 20 hours option if £1.5 million --

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Yes, 20 hours, working in partnership with private providers?

Ms. B. Lewis:

With us, yes.

Mr. M. Farley:

What we are not sure about is that in the early part of the discussion with ESC (Education, Sport and Culture) about the 20 hours, there was the question of whether the department was prepared to charge their parents for the extra hours over and above 20. Now, some of us feel that that was on the table but it has sort of disappeared off the table as an issue. Clearly, if it had been pursued, there was a revenue stream, a substantial revenue stream, available there. Clearly, there needs to be some adjustment so that people that can afford to pay are paying and so on, but that whole issue of what happened to charging over and above the 20 hours sort of disappeared by the time it got to the States. We are in some confusion as to how that happened.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

The discussion with you this morning is raising a number of questions for us all, probably more questions than answers. That is our position at the moment. What I would like to know is was there any

dialogue or discussion with you as an association before this proposal was announced publicly, the 20 hours for all 3 and 4-year-olds?

Mr. T. Brint:

Yes, there are meetings.

Mr. M. Farley:

We had an opportunity to have a without prejudice meeting with the Chief Minister which was extremely useful. In fact, the JEYA representation was there because I think most of the members had an input into that.

Ms. B. Lewis:

The family day carers were there, too.

Mr. M. Farley:

So that was a groundbreaking meeting because we felt that we had got our point across and that that point was going to go straight back to the Council of Ministers.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Can I just clarify, then, your meetings that you have deemed to be the most productive have been directly with the Chief Minister?

Mr. M. Farley:

Absolutely.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

The Education Minister, was he present?

Mr. M. Farley:

No.

Mr. T. Brint:

The meeting that we had with the Education Minister and Director of Education where we agreed to support the 20 hours - and correct me if I make a mistake in this - I felt that we were encouraged to support the 20 hours because if we went for making the view that the Education Department could find that money from within their budget, then it would be a very long, protracted, messy discussion that would delay our getting any funding. So the likelihood --

Mr. M. Farley:

We are always on the back foot in that because the discussion then goes: “Well, what would you cut out of our budget to find the £1.6 million?” or whatever it was. I think as amateur politicians everybody could probably give you a list of what they would cut, but we do not see the big picture. So it is not a good position to be asked: “What would you close to fund yourself?”

Ms. B. Lewis:

Yes: “How can you help us?” Yes.

Mr. T. Brint:

As I said, the threat from Education has always been Jersey Heritage, I think, the Library Service, the Youth Service. I did ask the Minister why the threat has never been to reduce the number of civil servants, but he said that that was because they represented such good value for money so we have to accept his word on that.

Mr. M. Farley:

Part of the proposal which has also disappeared is that there was a very expensive civil servant to be added to the mix, was there not?

Mr. T. Brint:

Yes.

Ms. B. Lewis:

That has gone away.

Mr. T. Brint:

I do not know if it is still in play, but there will be an early years person who will bring together the private sector and public sector. I do not know if that --

Mr. M. Farley:

At a very large salary.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Who is your contact at Education at the moment? Who do you deal with civil servant-wise?

Mr. T. Brint:

The person who regulates the private sector is Dr. Sandra Mountford, but the person who we are fighting politically with or discussing politically with to try and get this level playing field has been Mario

Lundy.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

What contact do you have with Yasmin Thebault? Do you have any?

Ms. B. Lewis:

No. Her remit is the maintain sector; it is not anything to do with us. That is how I think she clearly sees her role.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Is the maintain the public ...?

Ms. B. Lewis:

Yes.

Mr. T. Brint:

I think this is part of the big fracture division between the 2 sectors that Dr. Sandra Mountford has her part, which is all the private sector; Yasmin Thebault has all her part, which is the school sector. The 2 never meet and it has created an awful lot of arrogance and what we believe is arrogance coming from the States sector, from the school sector that: "They are just playing. They are just messing about really with what they are doing. It is not proper education because proper education comes from an education degree and we are teachers and we know how to do it."

Mr. M. Farley:

I cannot ever recall meeting Yasmin Thebault and Dr. Mountford in the same room at the same time.

Ms. B. Lewis:

No. I think with wrap-around care when that was piloted, we as the provider never knew who was driving it from the department, who was taking responsibility for it. We just were told the teacher that had been appointed. I do not think the school were given a good background about wrap-around care. I do not think the head teacher was taken to see some wrap-around care in England or anything like that. I think it was: "Oh, this is a wrap-around care school but it will not affect you", sort of thing, but of course it affected them. It affected them in a huge way and it affected us in a huge way and it has not worked.

Mr. M. Farley:

What we have to remember, of course, is that not just the Minister but the upper echelons of Education, Sport and Culture are teachers administering teachers. It does not happen in Health; it does not happen

to my knowledge in many other sectors. That could be extremely productive but it can also have a downside. Perhaps one of the reasons we find ourselves in the position we are today is we are at a result of perhaps the downside of teachers administering teachers.

Ms. B. Lewis:

It is a top-down approach. They are all head teachers.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Are you able at this moment to tell us how many 3 and 4-year-olds are cared for within the private sector?

Mr. M. Farley:

I think on the record perhaps not. I think that is something I would prefer to come back to you.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

If you could get back to us on this, yes.

Ms. B. Lewis:

We can certainly give you that information within hours but we do not have it at our fingertips.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I know that Deputy Gallichan is keen to ask another question, but Deputy Pitman first of all.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Since the Education Department began its policy on adding on provision to primary schools, are you aware of the number of private providers that have closed?

Mr. T. Brint:

That would have to be information that we gather. It has clearly had an effect on the private sector. It can be quite hard to measure in many cases, but a typical scenario of what is happening at the moment is that parents will place their child at a nursery from an early age and then when they get to 3 they are torn apart as to whether to take that free schools place or to leave their child where they are, where they know the staff, they are happy. I have a number of letters on record, I could point a number of parents the way of Scrutiny to discuss the tear of the situation that they had. Very often parents will take that free schools place because they want to have a second child and they cannot afford to have 2 children in the same nursery.

Mr. M. Farley:

Then they have to make all sorts of other arrangements because obviously the educational establishments are only open for 38 weeks of the year and they close early in the day. So those parents have to make all sorts of other arrangements for what you do when those facilities are not open.

Ms. B. Lewis:

It is mainly the preschools that closed. I was the regulator at the time - I jumped ship about 5 years ago - and I was working for the department. It was mainly the preschools. There is an argument that perhaps their time was up, that preschools, the sort of ones that closed, that concept had been running for about 50 or 60 years; perhaps the community no longer needed to work at using those as it did. But all this information and the number of 3 and 4-year-olds is held by our regulator, which is why it is extraordinary she has not been invited, why she has not been used, because she has all this information.

Deputy S. Pitman:

This concern of closing our private provision, have you put that to the Minister and, if so, what was the response?

Mr. M. Farley:

I think the Chief Minister certainly understood the frailty of some of the businesses that were in the private sector. This is not the occasion to come and plead poverty, but it is a factor that the policy has impacted on the viability of some of the private sector nurseries. One of the spin-offs is also that it has driven up the price of the place for younger children. Somebody has 2 children. When the 3-year-old goes off to a free place, if they are working they still need to have the younger child in care. The younger child stays in an establishment where the ratio is 1:3 or 1:4 so the price is higher so the cost goes up. So in a funny sort of way, by offering a free service here what they have done is push the price up here.

Mr. T. Brint:

With the Minister and the Director of Education, the then Deputy Director of Education, for about the first 3 years of the argument the stance of Education was that people are leaving the private sector because the private sector is not as good as our schools and they would not entertain the fact that people were making a financial decision. It has been a long, hard struggle to get the Minister to admit even in part that there is quality in the private sector. If the Education Department give any money to the private sector, then the battle in many ways has only just begun because there will have to be a big discussion about quality. I believe - and perhaps it is more of a male position, I do not know - that quality can be bought. If you put enough money into an establishment, then you will get quality and the equation with early years simply is not that. Money has an effect, but after a certain amount it does not make any difference and quality comes from staff training, staff relationships, working with parents. Those are the quality indicators. Tests on 3 and 4-year-olds do not really show up those indications of quality. But

this is a battle that we are going to have in the future because Education will want to see money equalling quality - I am assuming and hoping they will be more open-minded than this - that also some sort of test indicator will prove quality or you must have a teacher on site to prove quality.

Ms. B. Lewis:

Very often the teachers that are given the nursery classes have no previous work or training in under 5s. They come from perhaps a year 5 and they are straight in with children who are just over 3 years old.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I find that astonishing. I had not considered that.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Do you have any evidence of that?

Ms. B. Lewis:

I think probably the employment records of some of the teachers. There are some nursery teachers on the Island, but it is almost as if the capital investment into the buildings, which are beautiful, absolutely wonderful, sort of fell short at the last fence because then you need to go and find the person who is terribly comfortable with that environment and knows exactly what they are doing to run that environment effectively. That did not happen because I guess the very expensive members of the teaching profession have to come from England probably, this community did not have them, and that would have meant a whole new ballgame, huge additional expense to bring in this person, I am surmising now, because they were not in there. In fact, the teacher we run with wrap-around care came from year 7 straight into the nursery class.

Mr. M. Farley:

I have always wondered whether when the first couple of nurseries were built back in the 1980s, I suppose, was there ever a strategic plan? Did anybody ever sit down and say: "What is this going to cost us if we are going to roll this out for 1,000 children, 200-and-something staff? What is this going to cost and what are the implications of what we are doing?" I have a certain sympathy with the position that ESC find themselves in today because I do not believe if that strategy was done whether it was done properly, and I suspect that it probably was not done at all. We all find ourselves as a result of that initial, probably very well-intentioned idea -- but it got very bitter, did it not? It has been very, very bitter in recent times. The record shows, if you just look at the comments that have flown backwards and forwards through the pages of the *Evening Post* around what the Department and what the various people have said about the private sector, it has been, frankly, insulting. Now I think we are over that. We are where we are possibly because of expediency, but I think there is a very, very hard core attitude deeply ingrained in the Department that we are second rate.

Ms. B. Lewis:

I do not think the impact on the community was thought about when they brought this policy in and I think that because historically the Education Department has been run by teachers and teachers do not have those skills and they did not consult with the community, I do not think, to see how it would affect.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I think it comes back to my question earlier, do you feel in any way that there was a strategy behind any of this? You are all shaking your heads.

Ms. B. Lewis:

No, it was a wonderful idea and it was built on academic research, which is actually now being questioned but that is an aside. It was wonderful.

Mr. M. Farley:

Reputations have been made off the back of it and I think there has been a requirement for some people to safeguard their reputations.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Would you like to expand on that for us?

Mr. M. Farley:

Not on the record, no.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I wonder if I could go back to the comment that you made earlier, Mr. Farley, about your own nursery which is funded through an employer and parental scheme. I would like to get on to the economic side of it inasmuch as we have an Economic Development Department within the States which is there to give guidance to business and to help promote growth of business and the economy. You mentioned, I think, that you are the only private provider that has this mix of employer and parent contributions.

Mr. M. Farley:

The predecessor to Sandra Mountford, Jane Farley, was handling our initial registration - this is 17 years ago - and also handling a request from what was then Midland Bank to do something about their staffing levels and providing child care for their staff. She brought the 2 of us together. As a result of that, for 17 years now we have had a commercial relationship with what is now HSBC. Obviously I am not going to go into a great deal of detail about that; suffice to say that it appears - and the proof is in the time that it has been in existence - that each element gets some benefit from the arrangement. So if the

employer makes a contribution towards the child care, it says things about the value of their staff, that the staff have some financial assistance with their fees, and the nursery has an additional stability because you are dealing with 2 sides. There has been over the years huge complications with tax structures, all sorts of stuff, way beyond my understanding, but frankly I have always been very surprised that it is not an approach that has been properly examined.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

That was really the point behind my question rather than expecting you to speak about the financial side of it. It is the ethos behind the structure. We had the Minister for Economic Development here yesterday and we were questioning how they deal with private nursery providers. Do they come out to you to ask what availability you have or what capacity you have? Are they consulting with you when they are looking to set up new businesses? What contact is there? Is there any? Should there be any?

Mr. M. Farley:

My personal view is that somewhere along the lines, somewhere along the way, the figures that they used to calculate the demand for public sector places were flawed because I think the research that they did where they said: "How many vacancies have you all got?" what they failed to do was take into account that we probably all had the same people on our waiting lists. I have always had this feeling that one of the things that went drastically wrong with this was the original research.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

When you say "they" who are you ...?

Mr. M. Farley:

Education.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

It is interesting what you said because I am sure that when the emphasis changed to a single intake into the primary school, that must have played havoc with the figures. Because I know that at certain times preschools then, as they were, were keeping places available because they knew that they would be needed later on, if you see what I mean. It must have been chaos and I should imagine that the time when they crystallised their question to you about places would have had a tremendous swing depending when they had done it.

Mr. M. Farley:

It still does because every September we all empty out.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Yes, absolutely.

Ms. B. Lewis:

It goes in a 2-year cycle. This year we are feeling quite rich. You know, we will not be because I think we have got 2 places but next year we know that we will go back into the red.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Is it fair to say that possibly the impact of the changes were not fully followed through by the Department?

Ms. B. Lewis:

No, because it is not a skill that teachers have. You know, if the Department is being run by teachers, head teachers, they do not have business skills.

Mr. T. Brint:

There are 2 angles to it. One angle is the administration of the nurseries, and I would advise any mum-to-be to try and have her baby between September and November, then she will have the pick of nurseries because they will all be empty. Do not have a baby in March when they are all busy. But the research also shows that summer babies do not do as well educationally as winter babies. I have been looking into the research myself recently because my youngest is a summer baby, and it is quite startling when you look into it. Actually, by the schools only having the single September intake, for the youngest children right from the start it is attacking their self-esteem because there are children who are so much more able and advanced than them that even subtly by osmosis they are soaking in this feeling of: "Why can I not write my name yet? Why can I not ride the bike like he or she does yet?" It carries on right through the years. So it surprises me from an educational issue why, or if they were running a research-driven profession then they would say: "This is crazy. It is not good for children." If they are trying to protect themselves and keep the nurseries full all year long, then it is a great move because you are full from day one and you can justify your job and your wage.

Mr. M. Farley:

There is some evidence that they got the demand figures wrong, is there not? Because some of the anecdotal stories we have all heard about what then went on to fill the public sector places with arm-twisting: "If you want your child to come to this primary school you have to come to the preschool" and so on. So something was not right with that element of the strategy, but that has, of course, been in more recent times.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Can I just ask also on the economic side, I know that there are some quite large units in the private

sector but also they can also be quite a small business. Is the industry then aware of the support that it could get from the Economic Development Department?

Ms. B. Lewis:

I would say no.

Mr. M. Farley:

No.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Because one of our big concerns, of course, is the economic aspect. We have identified from our hearing yesterday that the majority of people who are not economically active in the Island but might wish to be are mothers who might wish to return to work. I am just concerned that nobody has apparently tried to incentivise the private sector to perhaps cope with any increase in demand. I was wondering, particularly when you said, Mr. Farley, that nobody had come along and said: "How are you doing it? Can you share the model?" or whatever, whether there was any incentive that could be offered to employers in future and to small businesses to increase the private sector --

Ms. B. Lewis:

There is an example of that. Centre Point Trust offer school-age care; the majority of our work is with school-age children. We do have a day nursery. We have had, up until now, a school-age discount which has been an incentive. It has given parents up to 60 per cent back of their care fees for the school-age child. That has, despite a battle, gone into Income Support, which has changed it to a handout and so it has completely changed the essence. There was incentive; there was dignity; there was acceptance that -- because we prioritise single parents at Centre Point it was population control, by getting women back into the workforce and also allowing these women to rise above the level of poverty, but that dignity has been taken away and it is now in Income Support and we are fearful because we will lose contracts because they will not get Income Support. But they had this incentive to come back to work that has gone.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Can I also ask something that occurred to me while one of you was speaking before? It is maybe a bit personal, but is there an impression from providers in the private sector that their industry in effect is not taken as seriously as the financial services or whatever?

Ms. B. Lewis:

Absolutely.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Okay. So you do not feel really that you are treated as an integral facilitator for the growth of the other industry?

Mr. M. Farley:

It is a fight for everything. I am in the process of trying to get agreement on manpower, a manpower policy for the new facility. The red tape element just purely from a business point of view is phenomenal.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I am very interested to hear you say that because --

Mr. M. Farley:

You have made a very interesting point because you have got me thinking that perhaps the business model has fallen down a gap in the middle. While the ideological fight has been taking place between nursery care and child care the actual business model has just been completely redundant, and it is a very good point.

Ms. B. Lewis:

Culturally I think we feel that child care is still the family's responsibility, not the community's responsibility. I think there is a big cultural belief there and certainly with some of the minority groups it is much stronger with them than it is ...

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

When we were speaking to the Minister yesterday, I really felt that they could be doing a great deal more to encourage employers to think about child care provision for their employees and your sector could, in fact, be expanding.

Mr. M. Farley:

I think there was a possibility earlier in the year, much earlier in the year, that the funding for the universal 20 hours would be found. What knocked it off - and which answers your question about how they see the importance of this - was that when the States decided that this year's public sector pay increase had to be met within existing budgets that suddenly caused huge panic around the ESC. A huge amount of their budget goes on staffing and suddenly it was: "Gosh, we have to maintain salaries", so the salary argument over-rode absolutely everything. It is easy for us on the outside to say that perhaps that was the time to have a reappraisal of all of this, but it did not happen and so the spectre of a solution just disappeared when that problem came along. Now it does not look like it is going to get any better, does it? So I do not know what the pay round is for next year but the GST and possibly inflation and

States decisions about how the payroll is going to be met, whatever, we know that the ESC is not going to have spare cash. So looking to them where we are at the moment for a solution, the solution, the 20-hour solution, is clearly not going to happen.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Keeping on the same line of questioning, have you had any meetings with Economic Development at all?

Mr. T. Brint:

No, we have not. We have been trying to meet with the Treasury, Mr. Le Sueur.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

When you say “trying to meet” ...?

Mr. T. Brint:

Sending various emails, letters, trying to make contact, and I do not know if we have had an answer, have we?

Mr. M. Farley:

In fact, Centre Point has taken it upon themselves to brief each of the Ministers, have you not? You have invited most of the Ministers at various times now?

Ms. B. Lewis:

Yes.

Mr. M. Farley:

Without being rude, I am not entirely sure that the knowledge of this very complicated issue is widely understood among very busy senior politicians.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Well, I think that goes back really -- you mentioned senior politicians, but speaking personally, until I came to look at this as a review topic I did not have any of the background that I think must be needed to make responsible decisions in this respect by all politicians. Deputy Gallichan had a question I believe on underground child care?

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Yes, I obviously had been peripherally aware of this but you have sparked off a concern about -- you mentioned the current shambolic situation is literally driving child care underground. I am just

wondering if you have any ideas how we could try and get more information on this, where we could look for ...?

Mr. M. Farley:

Dr. Mountford.

Mr. T. Brint:

I think what I said at the last Scrutiny meeting that I think was a couple of years ago, the States really need to get a clear policy together about what it wants for children and families, for young children and families. It is soon probably going to extend maternity leave. What does it think that parents are going to do during that time? There is an awful lot of literature about that can help parents work with their children in a developmental way. I am reticent to use the word "educate" but that can help their children, and the ideal situation in my experience for a lot of mothers - and it almost always tends to be mothers - is to work part-time and to have part-time child care. It makes them a good employee, it gives them a good sense of wellbeing as a mother and it is good for the child as well, because if mum is happy then the child is almost always happy and settled as well. So it is these sort of issues that the States are really going to have to articulate: "Yes, we support women's choice in this area" or: "Well, we think children should all be at home until they are ready to go to school at 5, and this is how we are going to support it." The other issue I think where children should not suffer because it is not their choice is I believe that families coming to the Island have to wait 5 years for benefits. I am not sure of the accuracy, if that is the case?

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I think for some.

Mr. T. Brint:

The children have not had a choice in moving here and they really should not have to wait on 5 years to have the benefit --

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I believe under the Income Support thing the child care element is available at day one, is it not, the educational support? The provision of Income Support, there is one part which is available immediately upon arrival, is there not?

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Yes, there is. I cannot remember.

Ms. B. Lewis:

Only for J category for essentially employed.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

It is something we will be looking at, certainly.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Could I just develop what you were saying there? Bearing in mind that we are looking at the wellbeing of the child, basically as one of the fundamental criteria here, are the private sector involved in any way with other providers for health, social services, et cetera? Is there any communication into your structure?

Ms. B. Lewis:

We as a charity support other charities with child care.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

But there is not any other interaction? What links do you have?

Mr. T. Brint:

I think it is left up to nurseries to arrange themselves. We work quite carefully with the health visitors.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

All right. Okay.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

The health visitors or Health and Social Services have not made any move to meet you as an organisation to discuss early years development, for instance?

Ms. B. Lewis:

No.

Mr. M. Farley:

On other issues we have had no feedback on the issue of GST. We have heard rumours that the Child Care Trust may have been in negotiation about the removal of GST for nursery fees, but we do not know that formally yet so we have no response on GST. You mentioned maternity pay. It is going to be a very interesting situation. Take a mother who has to work and has earnings of a certain level in order to pay her half of the mortgage or whatever. The maternity payments that she is going to receive are no way going to be able to keep that family afloat, so with all the best will in the world the intentions of the State to provide that maternity pay is not going to help these people whatsoever. They are going to need

to go back to work. It is the hothouse element of the economy which requires a huge -- and I am very bad on research, but I understand this is one of the places in the world where more parents, both sides, have to work. A lot of our social problems that we see are as a direct result of parents who are working flat out to keep their family ships afloat.

Ms. B. Lewis:

We prioritise single parents. A third of our client group are single parents, if not more, and there is evidence that flexi-time is supporting families, which is very good, but you have to be in a position to be able to negotiate flexi-time and there are still people, predominantly women, who do not have that sort of workforce power, if you like, that have to work the hours the boss gives them and that is it.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

It is an issue that we addressed yesterday with the Economic Development Minister about incentives for parents or to get parents back into the workplace, such as flexible hours, job share and things like that, so we are looking at that as well to address within ...

Ms. B. Lewis:

The single parent is a desperate parent and they will take -- and if they do not have qualifications they have to go and work in the Co-op or something like that and they do not have any power within the work environment.

Mr. M. Farley:

We have certainly noticed over the years that something is changing in the economy in that when we first started working parents would be full-time, maybe 40 or 45 hours. Now the vast majority of parents who want a full-time place, a full-time place means they finish at 3.30 p.m., so something is happening clearly out there in the employment world in terms of hours and flexibility.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Perhaps a recognition from the employer?

Ms. B. Lewis:

But that is happening at higher levels. There is still a lower level where that is not happening in our experience.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Something else occurred to me just as we were speaking. Do you have many children who have English as a second language? Are you aware within your ...?

Ms. B. Lewis:

We have about 40 per cent of our nursery.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

40 per cent?

Ms. B. Lewis:

Yes, I am thinking -- yes, we have 16 2-year-olds and about 6 or 7 of those are not English speaking.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Do you have any support to deal with that from anywhere?

Ms. B. Lewis:

No. No.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

The answer is clearly no.

Ms. B. Lewis:

No. We make a point of employing if we can people who speak other languages. We can only do that with the Portuguese community; we cannot at the moment do it with any other community, but we do make sure we employ somebody who --

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Do you think that that support in some way is something that should be recognised as a necessity for you as private providers, perhaps via education?

Ms. B. Lewis:

Not with very young children. I do not think so. I think we are doing that very well at the moment.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

You are dealing with it?

Ms. B. Lewis:

Yes, I would say. I think older, much older.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

We had some pre-prepared questions for you and we have not really needed them, so I hope you do not

mind if we just check, please, to see that we have addressed everything, because we have covered quite a comprehensive range here this morning. You mentioned that you do not have funding for your Association at all. You do not charge a membership fee?

Ms. B. Lewis:

We are thinking about it but we have not done it yet.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Do you have any contact with such forums as the Chamber of Commerce or the IOD (Institute of Directors) at all?

Mr. T. Brint:

Not formally. I am a member of the IOD but we have not explored any contact or link with them.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Again we are just looking at how these employers' organisations see you as private providers of child care to enable their employees to work with peace of mind, in fact. There seems to be a disconnect. I think certainly this is what is coming across to me. Dr. Hamer, can you think of anything that perhaps we should -- one of our questions was how do you see the relationship between you and the public sector at the moment, but I think you have addressed that quite well.

Mr. M. Farley:

Could I just throw in another point and that is in relation to training of staff. Obviously Highlands provides training for early years, but there is a shortage of experienced and qualified staff for filling senior level positions, managers and deputy managers and so on, and if you could take that on board and pass that to any colleagues at the Population Department that would be very useful.

Mr. T. Brint:

I was just going to say, just to give you an idea of the culture that we are working in, issues like training, and the TEP (Training and Employment Partnership) is an organisation that has gone there and does not support us in any way at all, but the way things work with the child care sector it is akin to drug pushers really. They started off with some training years back with level 4 training, quite meaty training for management qualifications for which they provided the funding, so the private sector are always very keen on training. There is no holdback there for the private sector to improve ourselves. We do not say that we know it all and that we do not want to know anything else; it is quite the reverse. So we launched into this training enthusiastically. It then became part of registration. Fine, because we are all supportive of this, but as soon as it became part of registration States funding through TEP was pulled.

Ms. B. Lewis:

That is Economic Development. They pulled our funding.

Mr. T. Brint:

The year before last we had to find £6,000 to cover this sort of training. It is a big expense that is now mandatory, and it is not that we do not support it because it does improve quality and we are all for quality, it is just that this is the type of culture that we are up against.

Ms. B. Lewis:

Also, not only did they pull the funding for it, but also Highlands doubled the fees, so Jersey Business School added £1,000 to the mandatory level for qualification that we have to hold.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

So you were faced with a double whammy?

Ms. B. Lewis:

Oh, yes.

Mr. T. Brint:

They make it law.

Ms. B. Lewis:

Then from then up go the prices. It costs about £5,000 to train a manager.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Mr. Brint, you spoke earlier about the necessity really of continuity for the child and, of course, the child is at the bottom of all of this. Because of the better pay in the public sector, how does that impact upon the staff that you have? Do you lose them to the public sector or do you not find that that is a problem?

Ms. B. Lewis:

They have 2 care workers working with a teacher in each nursery. I think there are always a lot of applicants when those jobs become available because they are term time only. It suits a mother down to the ground to work there. There is no real responsibility. The teacher is taking responsibility in that arena. You do not have to do the sort of record keeping, you do not have to do all the sort of things that we expect our staff to do, so it is a much easier job when you are bringing up your own family. But we have not lost anybody to the schools. I think that there is also within good care workers a feeling that you cannot work effectively if somebody is telling you exactly what you are doing every day and how you are going to do it. So I have not lost any. Have you lost any?

Mr. M. Farley:

I am just thinking that whenever we have lost staff often like that they will come back. It is a small village, though, because all the people in the sector know each other. It is not a well paid sector. Given the level of responsibility and the sort of work that we ask these really talented people to do they are not well rewarded and it is frustrating from a business point of view that you cannot reward your staff the way that you perhaps would like to. As I said before, it is a very restricted model. We have wracked our brains to try and find other revenue streams, other things that you could do to help bring in the revenue and, of course, the income goes up incrementally, so it goes up per child in blocks of fees. So you have this feast or famine. At certain times of the year you have more staff than you need because of the factors we have been talking about, so of course the fees have gone down like this, and then there are other times when you might be able to take on 2 or 3 more children where that revenue goes straight to the bottom line because you do not need any more staff, and then it changes again. So it is quite a complex situation and picking up from Deputy Gallichan's observation about the business side, I do not think the business, not only the macro element of the involvement of child care within the economy, is understood, but I do not think the economics of how the nursery side works that we all struggle with every day is understood either.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I am sure that you must have -- when you are trying to map out the size that you want to grow to, the fact that you have to constantly add in more staff.

Mr. M. Farley:

We all have to over-employ. We have to over-employ because, with respect, if one of you was not well today then you could make a plan, whereas if our staff are not well the parents still will turn up with them, so we have to over-employ at different levels.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

There is another question there. I know that the JCCT used to run a staff bank. Do you have a problem with sudden illness among staff? Can you cope or are you constantly having to keep people on your books?

Ms. B. Lewis:

I am the wrong person to ask because we have school-age care and if our nursery staff are down we send them up from ...

Mr. M. Farley:

To provide continuity you have to cope.

Mr. T. Brint:

It can be a problem but because there are supernumerary staff in place in an emergency they can step in.

Ms. B. Lewis:

It is the special needs that we struggle with and if you need a one-to-one the Jersey Child Care Trust was supposed to have this bank, but it does not. It has not functioned for years because there are no workers on the Island really of quality, or there are, we have them, but --

The Deputy of St. Mary:

They are already working for you.

Ms. B. Lewis:

There is no pooled provision.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

I have 3 quite quick questions. I think staffing was one of them. We have heard that the majority of private sector providers were already embracing the Foundation Stage Curriculum. Do you think that is a true and fair statement?

Ms. B. Lewis:

Yes, most definitely.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Excellent. I told you they were quick. Presumably you are aware of, but do you make use of the teacher advisor who has been provided by the Education Department?

Ms. B. Lewis:

Yes.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Is that a useful resource to you?

Ms. B. Lewis:

It is.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Is it adequate, do you think?

Ms. B. Lewis:

Yes.

Mr. T. Brint:

I think that there will be some discussion as time goes on over the Foundation Stage that it can be approached in different ways. It can be approached in a very teacher-led educational way or it can be approached in a very play way. Neither is probably completely right, neither is completely wrong, but there are benefits to both. So it is that sort of dialogue that the Education Department are going to be hopefully open-minded and constructive about and not just lay the law down to us in a dogmatic way. We hope.

Dr. C. Hamer:

I just want to ask a curriculum type question about the Foundation Stage in terms of whether you used the birth to 3 framework.

Ms. B. Lewis:

Yes.

Mr. T. Brint:

It is used, yes.

Dr. C. Hamer:

So is there any support provided with the implementation of training around that framework?

Ms. B. Lewis:

With our regulator. She provides it because that is part of her role. She provides the support for birth to 3 matters.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I am conscious of the time and we have over-run what we set for you and I hope that is not going to cause you any problems, but obviously it has been worth it from our point of view to hear what you have to say and hopefully from yours to feel that you are, in fact, being listened to, which I can assure you is happening. I just have 2 quick questions, if I may, based on something that you said earlier. You mentioned disabled children. Can you give us generally a background as to how you are able to cope with special needs?

Ms. B. Lewis:

We have one member of staff normally for each age group, the under-3s and the over-3s, who has extended her knowledge into special needs in some areas and she will work with the special needs child when the child comes to us, and that has its own difficulties inasmuch as she will be the key worker within the nursery. So she is taken away from her other 7 or 4 children to work with the special needs child. So there are always quality issues. The Jersey Child Care Trust will try and support us by finding workers but they have not been able to for the last year.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Would there be any link with Health and Social Services there for special needs?

Ms. B. Lewis:

Health and Social Services will put children with us for all sorts of reasons and will fund from time to time. They fund probably about 3 times in a year a child for a period of time with us who is special needs and will fund a one-to-one but we cannot find the staff.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

No, and in your membership do you have providers who would not be able perhaps to take on special needs children because of facilities or, as you say, staff?

Ms. B. Lewis:

Yes, and it is still by choice in Jersey. You do not have to take on children with special needs.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Thank you. One question that we had pre-prepared which I think should be addressed to you is with reference to the submission that you made to us about the need for all early years care and education providers to work in partnership. We wondered how you would see the remit of such a partnership and how you think it could operate and function effectively. It is quite broad.

Mr. T. Brint:

There is a great deal of research being done on the effect of partnerships in the mainland and how they work. Basically what needs to be done is to have very clear parameters set down on the subject matter, the piece of power on the table, if you like, that is up for discussion. That needs to be clearly laid out, be it the Foundation Stage Curriculum or whatever. The other very important factor to quality is to make sure that all interested bodies are represented. Then the other - and this is perhaps a contentious one for education - key to quality is to have an independent chair, and I think that is the one we may struggle with. So far it has proven difficult with those 3 quality factors. Education has not had JEYA represented on meetings that they have been having to do with early years. They have much more quickly invited JCCT because they are perhaps less confrontational than we are and there has been no

clear set-out of exactly what is up for discussion, what is on the table to be shared out in terms of power.

Mr. M. Farley:

We broached the subject in one of the meetings with ESC and clearly there is an opportunity for all the main bodies to be represented in a forum that should have power, that should meet regularly, should forget this dogmatic battleground and move forward. I think the ESC were very keen that they appoint the chair, which was something that we were against. I do not see any reason why it cannot be a reputable business person, anybody really that brings a different skill. Now, if you have, if you like, the public sector on one side, it was clear that the public sector should be represented by both strands of the department that we have been talking about, whether it is the Yasmin Thebault side and the Dr. Mountford side. That from our point of view would have been very useful if both sides were represented. On our side of the table clearly JEYA, and I think as the new boys on the block JEYA want to have a seat at that table, alongside the Jersey Child Care Trust or perhaps instead of the Child Care Trust. That would all come out in the fullness of funding and representation. There is a very simple way of constructing this model and getting on with it, but as you have heard for the last hour and a half it needs a lot greater consultation and integrated thinking and us all on the same page.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I will just come back to a word that you used in response to that question, which was “confrontational”. Why is it confrontational?

Mr. T. Brint:

I think partly because that is the nature of partnerships or bodies working together when they have not been speaking, and when they first get together they have to accept that there is a period of mudslinging and in a way it is healthy because it gets everything out in the open. From that point of view, and this is all researched and anecdotal from the mainland research, after that period a more constructive period naturally follows because everyone has felt that they have had their say. They have not been biting their lip about: “Well, you said 3 years ago and have not addressed that point of view.” It has to come out in the open. It will not be pleasant at first but after hopefully a very short period it will become constructive when everyone realises that they are no longer fighting for their own territory but they are working for what is best for the young children and families in the Island and that is what needs to be the priority. How long ago was the Jenny Spratt report? Was that ...?

Ms. B. Lewis:

About 3 or 4 years ago.

Mr. T. Brint:

About 3 years ago. In the wake of that one of Jenny's recommendations was partnership. Mario Lundy at the time said he did not have the authority to commission a partnership. We had some very constructive meetings together but there was no portion of power that he could put on the table to be discussed by people, so the meetings that we had had then were just moving to that constructive stage after the mudslinging period, just getting constructive and then it was stopped. Presumably it would have been the Minister who would have had to give the Deputy Director the authority to put a piece of power on the table to work out between us, but it just stopped and from then it reverted back to people fighting their own corners.

Mr. M. Farley:

Finally, one of the most frustrating things and the most optimistic things is that there are the key elements here to put together an absolute first class service. There has been proper investment in the buildings, there are good staff in Jersey, there is an engaged and experienced and high class public and private sector. I think there is now a willingness for all to work together, the setback with the States on the funding has to be overcome, but if we can just get through to what the plan is I think that there is a real -- you must hear all sorts of these intractable problems where there really is no solution. This is one where there is a solution and if somebody can just grab it and get that and push that solution through then it can go away as an issue and the Island will be better for it.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Thank you very much. Can I just ask one final question? Mr. Farley, you referred to a couple of matters that you suggested we could give consideration to. Is there anything else, perhaps? You know our terms of reference. We do have a catch-all that allows us to consider other matters other than the first 3 terms, but is there anything in particular that you would suggest to us that might need further consideration? I think we have discussed a lot and perhaps we have gone over.

Mr. M. Farley:

If it is one thing it is Sandra Mountford.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Yes, and if I may say so we obviously know about Dr. Mountford and we are dealing with that. She did not come to the hearing yesterday with the Minister. Okay, but please be assured that we are going to follow up on that.

Ms. B. Lewis:

The States Auditor has audited the Jersey Child Care Trust?

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Yes, he has done so and he is also carrying out a review of the Education Department as well and we are waiting for his report.

Ms. B. Lewis:

I think there is another one, too. Does the Minister for Education have another audit running as well?

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Yes, he has an independent audit I believe as well as the C and AG (Comptroller and Auditor General) so he is being well scrutinised at the moment, but the independent audit I am not sure whether that has begun or not, but he has asked for it. Just a couple of points to finish with, please. One of you mentioned a scenario earlier - I think it was you, Mr. Brint - in some letters that you have received describing scenarios whereby parents have certain difficulties, and I wonder if we could just catch you afterwards to have on a no names mentioned basis some idea of those scenarios. It would be helpful for our report. I believe Deputy Pitman had another question.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Yes, if this is an appropriate time. I would like to know the view of your members on what impact they think GST was going to have on provision?

Ms. B. Lewis:

We are already bracing ourselves for parents not to have a contract with us next year, because as a charity we are exempt GST but parents are not and so there has to be a re-prioritising of how they are going to spend their income. Child care I do not know how far -- every parent will have a different level of priority for it but they are responsible parents that are using child care. They are not the irresponsible ones and there is no reward for it.

Mr. M. Farley:

My understanding of GST from a one-hour seminar with the chap who comes round is that the GST element is not on the staff costs but on the other goods and services that come into the business, so if 75 per cent of our costs are staffing the GST element is on the 25 per cent. Now, certain nurseries, the larger ones, are, depending on how they structure themselves, going to attract GST and some are not. It is going to be an interesting point. It is going to be interesting to see who subsumes it and who passes it on, but in general terms it is a small factor but it just proves the wider point that we have been talking about in that it is an important issue which is months away and has not been properly addressed yet.

Mr. T. Brint:

I think from our standpoint I am really hoping that GST is not going to be put on child care fees and that everything we are hearing from the Trust is correct. I would think in our nursery the GST on goods and

services would be somewhere between 0.5 to 1 per cent of turnover, so quite how we soak that up I am not sure. It depends on things like training. If we pay GST on that hand and yet on the other hand the Economic Department saw fit to start backing training with some funding, then obviously it could be soaked up.

Mr. M. Farley:

I believe GST is chargeable on commercial rates, which could have an impact.

Mr. T. Brint:

Change that to property.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Well, I would like to thank you all for coming to speak to us this morning. I apologise for the over-run but I think it is beneficial to us and to you. What I would say is that I mentioned the transcript earlier. Obviously we are going to pore over that in great detail after which it may be that we identify further questions that we would like to ask you. I would imagine that in the first instance we would address those to you in writing, so you may be hearing from us further. As far as our report is concerned, we will be working on it and we hope to have it in a state to send out to contributors for their comments on the factual accuracy of their input into it, and so that will be near the end of the year that we would be sending it to you for your comments, after which we will reassess it and then publish it, hopefully with some recommendations that this Minister will take on board and act upon. Thank you very much.

Mr. M. Farley:

I think the best thing is to liaise through Val Payne.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Yes, that is fine.

Mr. M. Farley:

We will get Val to send you the list of the companies that are involved in JEYA.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Thank you very much indeed.