



Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Public Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Thursday, 19th September 2024

Panel:

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

Deputy H. Miles of St. Brelade

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée of St. Helier South

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville

Witnesses:

Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier Central - The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Deputy C.S. Alves of St. Helier Central - Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Mr. K. Posner - Director of Improvement and Transformation (covering Chief Officer leave)

Mr. S. O'Regan - Group Director of Education

Mr. J. Williams - Business Change Director

[15:01]

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

Welcome to this quarterly hearing of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. Today is 19th September. I would like to draw everyone's attention to the following. This hearing will be filmed and streamed live. The recording and transcript will be published afterwards on the

States Assembly website. All electronic devices, including mobile phones, should be switched to silent. So, for introductions now, I am Deputy Catherine Curtis, the Chair of the panel.

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville:

My name is Connétable Mark Labey from the Parish of Grouville. I am Vice-Chair of this panel.

Deputy H. Miles of St. Brelade:

I am Deputy Helen Miles, Deputy of St. Brelade, and I am a new member of the panel.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée of St. Helier South:

I am Deputy Porée, also a member of this panel.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Deputy Rob Ward, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Deputy Carina Alves. I am Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning.

Business Change Director:

Jonathan Williams, Programme Director for C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills).

Group Director of Education:

Sean O'Regan, Director of Education.

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

Keith Posner, Director of Improvement and Transformation at C.Y.P.E.S.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Thanks, everybody. We have one and a half hours for this hearing, so I will start with the first questions, which are about early years and nurseries. So, Minister, please could you tell us about the early years pilots which are under way with regard to the extension of early years provision?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, I am very pleased to. There are a number of pilots going ahead. I think I would also like to start by talking about that word "pilot". The model is that we pilot schemes to see their effectiveness,

see how they fit into the environments they are in, and see simply how they are working and whether they work.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

How long might these pilots be done for?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

They will go on for at least ... I would aim for a year for the students, but we will be proactive in them. Anyway, so in d'Auvergne there is a new offer to start after October to extending hours on Tuesday and Wednesday until 4.00 p.m. Hours will be increased term by term with a full wraparound offer of 46 to 48 weeks by September 2026. An early years breakfast club is offering extending hours each day, and there will be a stand-up free nursery summer club during 2025. Also there is a project, and I cannot find it in my notes, which will be starting at d'Auvergne for a targeted 2 to 3 year-old offer, a pilot provision that will create increased capacity for 2 to 3 year-olds making use of d'Auvergne School with J.C.C.T. (Jersey Child Care Trust), particularly targeted at those children who find it difficult to find a nursery place because of particular needs they may have. It is a well-known fact that the earlier we intervene and give support the better that is. That pilot using an organisation that exists and works well, with the facility in the school, gives us the opportunity as well to see how schools can interact with external providers. It is the detail how this would work with people coming in from offsite, how does it work with the head of that school, how do the staff interact, et cetera. So we want to pilot that type of thing.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. So if I can just ask, those 2 to 3 year-olds, are those children that already have a nursery place?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

No, they do not. They are the ones that we cannot find a nursery place for specific reasons, so we are targeting that need. That gives us the opportunity to, one, deal with the need that we recognised in the C.S.P. (Common Strategic Policy). It was the first part of it. Second, for that to act as a pilot, as I mentioned earlier. There is also Plat Douet commencing a wraparound offer to nursery from September 2024 from 8.00 until 5.30, a summer club which will still happen in 2025, July. Trinity will offer after-school nursery wraparound earlier than planned, to be in place by the end of September, initially until 4.00 p.m. but this will be reviewed and increased over time. They currently offer a breakfast club. So I am pleased that what we are doing is starting some of the pilots and it is earlier, I believe, than was planned. I will say to those who have been working on it thank you for that. We are only going to move forward if we try something, if we look at the impact that will have on, first and foremost, parents and the access that the parents want. Put simply, if parents simply

do not want it, then they do not want it. I would be surprised, but if they do not, they do not. We learn from that. I am not at all afraid to come back to the panel and say that project did not work so we stopped it. That is what we need to do.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Thanks. The schools you mentioned, d'Auvergne, Plat Douet, Trinity, those are all for 3 to 4 year-olds, apart from that special pilot for the 2 to 3 year-olds at d'Auvergne, is that right?

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is also Plat Douet. So there is an offer for 2 to 3 year-olds that will be delivered by the current staff that are utilising the unused capacity within the nursery. The provision will offer places to siblings of children attending Plat Douet in the first instance who are not in a private nursery and who may be at risk of starting the preschool year nursery well below their expected level of development. Again, that is being targeted.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, great. Our questions also include how many children, and I do not know if you want to follow that up in writing because it might be ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Jonathan, you have been so deeply ingrained in this you would probably have the numbers in your head, but if you want to do it later so we have detail, that would be really good.

Business Change Director:

If I may be permitted to come back, we can provide detail on the numbers on day one, how they are expected to scale up over time, and how they are differentiated by different school or offer. So we have a very clear matrix that sets that out, if I can provide that afterwards.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I think that would be better, and if you could add in when you expect them to start and ...

Business Change Director:

Yes, we have target start dates for each of those pilots that the Minister set out.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That is great. Okay. I think you have already said what the pilots are assessing about the parental take-up and ... anything else that the pilots will be assessing?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think it is how they work. Probably get a better answer than that but it is effectively how they work in the school setting. If we are going to utilise the spaces that we have and use them in a different way, we need to know that whatever we do works with the school. The school is a particular environment. We get that working well. The facilities are good. That is the best thing, they are set up. If that means we can offer those to external providers later on and we know how that works and we know the model of that, then let us use those spaces.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Now just getting on to the next part, if the proposed budget is approved by the Assembly, can you describe the changes that the revenue expenditure growth proposed to extend nursery and childcare provision, what that will mean for families in 2025?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Okay. It will be initially the extension of these places, the provision of those additional places, because it will cost. I think the vast majority of the money will really go towards that and embedding those pilots into a long-term provision and then extending that provision into 2026 and beyond. That is about right, is it not, Jonathan? That is what we have discussed?

Business Change Director:

Certainly, the bulk of the funding and the cost driver for the increase year on year is, as the Minister has described, principally around funding for those pilots and the extended provision into 2 to 3, or extending provision to more 2 to 3s. There are some other components in there. So we are also considering whether we should be investing further in some of the paediatric therapy, so speech and language or O.T. (occupational therapy). There is also, as the Minister has set out, in the C.S.P. some continued focus on continued professional development ... get my acronyms out. So there are a number of different things and the benefit of the pilot is that it starts to give some further understanding around the operational cost of delivery, and that will give us some further precision on exactly how that money is spent.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Can I just say another really important part is to get a better picture of demand because I think we can estimate demand from population and birth size, from immigration, but also I think there is hidden demand for 2 year-olds. I think if we offer those places and it is known that these places are now becoming more available, more parents may say ... who may have made the choice to say: "I am not going to go back to work, I will stay at home" to actually say: "I have the opportunity now we can take a nursery place." I think we have to be cognisant of the fact that there may be more demand

than we recognise, and if that is the case then we have to be flexible in the way we respond to that demand across the sector.

The Connétable of Grouville:

I am very pleased to see, Minister, that Plat Douet, d'Auvergne, they are in quite large centres of population. I am very pleased to see that you have decided to try Trinity School as well, and I will be very intrigued to see how you get on with that. Thank you very much.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

You are welcome to come and visit but let us let them get set up first.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Let them be in first, yes. [Laughter]

Deputy H. Miles:

My question was similar to the Connétable. The 3 pilot schools that you are doing are town and Trinity. Obviously, we have schools out west, big schools out west. Will you start looking at western schools before the pilot is completed or are you going to wait until the pilot is completed?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think sensibly we look during the pilot to see the feedback early on. I personally think that you will get a good view quite soon as to the workings or not, but the sensible thing would be to ... there is a sweet spot when to start those projects. Not immediately, we do not have enough feedback. Leave it too long and there is a need that you have not met. So there is somewhere in the middle there. I have been guilty - perhaps is not the right word - of pushing along ... I see Jonathan smiling, pushing a little bit to get some things in place because of the need that is there. The sooner we can do that the better, and the better we make that provision. Because it is a huge economic benefit for the Island as well.

Deputy H. Miles:

Can I just follow that up as well about the targeted offer? So we are putting the targeted offer into d'Auvergne and I think you said a targeted offer into ...?

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Plat Douet, yes.

Deputy H. Miles:

Plat Douet. Will children with identified needs who are out of those catchments be able to enjoy that targeted offer?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is a really good question. I believe that the answer is yes, but we have to see when that uptake is taken.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The resources as well with the facilities.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Because the Jersey Child Care Trust would have identified those young people.

Deputy H. Miles:

At the moment the J.C.C.T. model is that they will go into whatever nursery regardless of where the child resides.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Exactly.

Deputy H. Miles:

So are you looking at maintaining that model?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, absolutely.

Deputy H. Miles:

Okay. Thank you.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Because I think that is the right thing to do.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. So you mentioned just before the offer for 2 to 3 year-olds, so that is my next question. In the Assembly on 10th September you referenced the possible use of the Nursery Education Fund for provision of 15 hours for 2 to 3 year-olds. Please can you tell us more about that possible offering and whether that will be universal or targeted?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I would like that offering to be available at the appropriate time and I would like it to be universal, but we have to have the provision available. This is why getting on with the pilots is so important. If we know that we can start to build our 2 year-old provision, 2 to 3 year-old provision, we know and have a really clear picture of what that provision is ... we could get to a stage where the provision is not undertaken and we have it wrong in terms of numbers. I really do not think we have, but if we do, then we have to react to that. Once we have that right, once we know there is provision available, I think there will come a stage where I will have to make a decision to say now is the time when we can genuinely offer that 15 hours, and if a parent says: "I want that 15 hours" we can provide that 15 hours. That is the key thing. I do not think we are there yet.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That will start as targeted then?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. I am hoping ... I am ambitious. I think it has to be in place before any election so that it is in place, because then otherwise you end up with change and you do not want that.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

This is why the panel brought an amendment to the previous Government Plan, which did achieve a commitment from Government to review feasibility options for expanding early years nursery provision and childcare and that the Government would present a report to the Assembly with the options by 1st September, which has now passed. Now, in response to questions on this, you confirmed that you would provide an action plan by the end of October, that increase in financial implications, so can you tell us about that action plan?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, it will be produced at the end of October. The reason that we have done that is because we will have some pilots in place and I think it will be a document that is more in-depth, has more detail and has more content. Jonathan, do you want to talk a bit about that because I know there is a lot of work going on there?

[15:15]

Business Change Director:

The Minister is right to reflect that some things would have been delivered by that stage so it will be a much richer document in that it can reference things that have been done and, therefore, have greater integrity rather than things that are planned that carry a bit more risk of delivery. So by that

stage we will have a bit more insight into how the pilots the Minister has described are shaping up, including the numbers of children and families that will be affected as well. We will have some greater certainty around the financial modelling that enables us to extrapolate that into how might it look as we offer to more targeted 2 to 3 year-olds, how might it look if we scale these kind of models across the system to look after more, which I think the Chief Minister has also expressed an ambition for that universal 2 to 3. We will also, to Deputy Miles's point, have given consideration to what might be in the next phase of pilots. So there are other schools that are not in this first phase of pilots that expressed an interest, so by October we should be clear about who might be next in line and what they might wish to try. So the reason for those date changes is much greater richness of report and quality of information we can provide because we will have done some things.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. So ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Can I just say, given that there was a brand new C.S.P. because it had to be, a month delay to have a much richer report, I am quite happy to sit here and say that. I am quite pleased it is happening.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can you describe how the proposed budget has been prepared if the underlying actions are not yet finalised?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There will be estimates from numbers, of our estimates of the numbers of children that we might try and impact with. From that comes ... when you have numbers, you know numbers of staff, so you can estimate from that. So it would have been built up around that, but they are estimates, of course they are. They grow as the years go on because hopefully things will be in place and then we can build upon what is in place. So as that provision grows the cost will grow.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. Sorry, just to add on that as well, we used some of the data from the early childhood education and care survey as well to look at what the demand is for the 2 to 3s, for example.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Right. I know that Jonathan has already just mentioned the work that has been going into this, but have various different options been reviewed? Or is it mostly around one particular way of doing things?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

No, all options ... I will genuinely sit here and say all options are being considered, be it the use of school places, extension in private nurseries in the third sector ... is that the phrase, that nurseries ... we want to work at pace with this and we want to support everywhere that we can so that that provision increases because it is an identified need. Remember that all of this came from the roundtable work previously and the report that was produced, which is called ... I have a different report in my head from the roundtable. **[Laughter]** Jonathan will know.

Business Change Director:

Sorry, yes, there was an evidence refresh that was first produced and then we had a series of roundtables in quarter 4 last year that provided a policy set of options for the Ministers to consider, some of which you have extracted the C.S.P. items from.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

So that is a consistent approach over the last ... well, to be honest, I think beyond the last 2 years. It is something that has built up over time. So we are acting on that consultation and work that went on.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. So there is all the reports, all that work to go into this, but have you also consulted with all nursery providers about this and can you let us know what their feedback has been, or some of the feedback?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I have visited a number of nurseries recently to have one to one conversations with people. We have interacted with J.E.Y.A. (Jersey Early Years Association). I met them on 21st March and 6th August. I am meeting them again on 5th December. Officers met with them on 14th August, 21st August, 28th August, 11th September, and there are more dates for September and October, to include work with partners across. I do not think we have spoken to every individual member of J.E.Y.A. because that is not the way it works. They bring representatives. But we are looking to go and speak to as many nurseries as possible and I will say it is a really nice thing to do. I have visited 3 providers, a parish facility, 2 large providers which cater for children from 4 months to 4 years old. The plan is to visit more nurseries as well. They are conversations on the ground, talking about what they are doing, and I also get to look at what the nurseries look like. It has been many years since I took my children to nursery but they have changed and the nature of them is different as well. So we have spent a lot of time trying to gather that information. Certainly, officers in the background are spending an enormous amount of time with that interaction.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

The feedback from the nurseries which you have consulted with, has that been any disagreement or complete support of your plans?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, there is bound to be disagreement when you are trying to make change because the nurseries have different models. But I think there comes a stage when we have to try and say there is desperately a need created. I think this will help the sector become more sustainable because we will provide for that need. Different nurseries have different models. Some might find it more challenging than others. Certainly, some nurseries that we have spoken to are on board with significant change, perhaps the much larger ones. The parish nurseries that I visited were very positive as well. But there are positives to have everywhere, we just have to work our way through those things. I want to reassure the sector that what we are trying to do is to ensure that there is a sustainable model into the future that provides the needs for the Island. If we do not do that, there will be a real gap as we move on. As we try and support our economy and parents, we need to act on it.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

This plan, how long term is it for ... is it looking ahead to a year or 2 years or 3 years or what?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The plan for nurseries would be ... I would hope that it goes well into the future. What we need to develop is exactly that, a sustainable provision for nursery on this Island. I really hope that whoever is in government in the next 5 or 10 years support a N.E.F. (Nursery Education Fund).

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

When we see the action plan, will it be 2025, 2026, 2027 or ...?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think we are focused more on 2025 and 2026 because those are the years that we can really act upon and if that is in place ... I think naturally it is a good idea to review at the end of that year anyway. Let us look at how those pilots are working. They could be more successful than we realise and when people see the value of them we might have more people wanting to come on board. I hope that is the case.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. So now I will just move on to ask about the training for people working in nurseries. In response to questions in the Assembly on 10th September, you advised that there was to be an

increase to places on early years courses at Highlands College. So please could you confirm which course this is? Is it a degree course or a level 2 or a level 3? How many places was this increased by?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Have you got those figures? Because I cannot find them in my pack. I may have to give you the detail of the numbers separately, but it would certainly be level 2 and level 3 provision at Highlands because ... I had those numbers. Have you got those numbers?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It is not a degree course, then?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There is a childhood studies degree course, I believe, that still runs. I think at this level of what we are doing to provide workers in the sector it is up to level 3 that is the most important qualification. Then as we develop into the lifelong learning remit, one of the things I would like to see is to target that sector to give further training where it is wanted and where it is needed so that people see that as their career. I do not think we valued childcare previously, I have to say, and I think the more we do that, the better it is.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There is also a part-time apprenticeship that is currently supported by Skills Jersey and generally it is a day a week for people who are already working in the sector. So those courses are usually available via an application and interview process that happens around May/June time. The full-time and part-time childcare qualifications start generally in September that are run by Highlands. They are normally for those young people who have completed G.C.S.E.s (General Certificate of Secondary Education) the summer before and have ... but there are some mature students that do go on to those courses as well.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I just wonder if you could perhaps give us an update in writing on the number of places on each of these courses and whether the degree one is definitely still running.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, I apologise because I thought I had those numbers, but I have not. Sorry.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Can I ask Deputy Alves what is the name of this qualification you have been mentioning, part-time?

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is an apprenticeship. It is supported by Skills Jersey, so that may be a route in.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

When we visited the nurseries I think just about every single one of them had students who were attending that one day a week course.

Deputy H. Miles:

Is that the level 2 and the level 3?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, I think it goes from the level 2 into the level 3. They have something called a registration at the end.

Deputy H. Miles:

How are those funded?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

They are funded through apprenticeship funding at Highlands.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Now, also I know that you have spoken about wanting to attract a different demographic to the workforce as well. So could you describe how this will be done?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. Well, we are wanting to launch as soon as possible a recruitment campaign for across the sector. So all parts of the sector, state, private, third sector, just to say to people on the Island that early years and childcare is something you can step into. Now, we have young people who go into that sector all the time, but I think there is an untapped resource of people who might want to return to work, who may have brought their own families up and want to return to work. So getting them back into the workforce, offering the type of training that we said, either a day a week or ... and also tailored courses, which can be developed, I believe. It opens another sector of the economy up, another demographic within our workforce, which will be very, very useful for nurseries as we expand.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Will there be flexibility not only in the training available but also looking at flexibility in working hours?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, yes, that is up to the employer obviously but I think to some extent employers want that. They may want somebody to cover a couple of days or ... a lot of the nurseries have a morning ...

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Session.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

... session is the word I am searching for, an afternoon session; some go all the way through. So it may well be that that works. The analogy is, and it is not a direct comparison at all ... I think I have mentioned this before. When we introduced school meals, sometimes some of the parents in the school started to work to deliver the school meals in terms of the preparation and serving of them. Because their children were in the school, it worked perfectly for the hours. They were getting back into the workforce and a real commitment to the school. Now, I know it is different with childcare but that model of hours and fitting in might work.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

You might get some more people that way.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Perhaps if we could just follow up in writing maybe with any details about any of the flexibility and timing of the courses if that is okay.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. I think as we are developing ... I had some meetings today and this week and we are hoping to go through some stuff about the lifelong learning remit and what we mean and apprenticeships and how they could be more flexible. We would certainly be looking to do that. That is really important. We cannot have one size fits all for our workforce. It simply does not work.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you. Now, Mark, you have some questions.

The Connétable of Grouville:

The next section, Minister, is about the capital projects, if I may. Can you update the panel about why some of the capital projects for C.Y.P.E.S. that had been due to take place in 2025 have been delayed or cancelled?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. I think there has been an issue with capital projects, not just in C.Y.P.E.S. but across Government, in that they are all frontloaded. So at the beginning of the year we say we are going to produce all of these projects, I think £150 million they put away each year, and I think the average spend over the last 5 years was £80 million a year, which means a lot of projects would not be happening. So there is a simple equation to be had there as to what is deliverable. Now, what we want to do is we want to deliver projects that are possible now and soon, and so the prioritisation to some is to say, look, we can deliver them now, with the classic example being La Passerelle Secondary School. We believe that is ready to go; there is already work starting in terms of planning. We have plans written. We know what we want to do with it, and with a good wind and the planning process going well - touch wood, he says; we all know about planning, particularly you, Constable - then we are hoping that could be up and running by next October or next November. That is a facility that is desperately needed and it can be in place. Other facilities, they may be knocked back. They may be knocked back a year or so or if they are ready to go in the background we have to be flexible with our approach. I have said a number of times - and I know Keith will be banging his head against the desk when I say - if something else cannot happen how flexible can we be in putting something in its place. I think that is the model we are working on. So we have to make a decision at the beginning of the year in terms of which may be delayed, but if it is any way possible and we can bring them forward again, we will. But the reality is we have not spent £150 million a year on capital projects for the last I do not know how many years. I think this is a pragmatic approach.

The Connétable of Grouville:

We have a list here of 9 potential projects. That is a massive descale, if you like, in your financial capital projects.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, it is a rearrangement of when they can be undertaken. I would ask the question: was it really possible to do more in this year? I do not think it was, to be quite frank. But it means they are not thrown away but they are put in a more realistic place. I think that is one of the models that we have. Yes, they are difficult decisions to make, absolutely.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Talking of that decision, what involvement did C.Y.P.E.S. have with these decisions?

[15:30]

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, Keith has been dealing with this so I will say something first and then I will let you, because I know you probably want to ... certainly, we would have had to try and prioritise, be realistic about ... because we have an in-depth knowledge of which ones are possible now and which ones will take more time, an example being if we have a field that we want to convert for a school but there are still negotiations going on with the owners and we have got nowhere near planning permission, nowhere near anything going on, it is unlikely that is going to happen this year. So delaying that is not as difficult a decision as it is for me to say: "We are going to delay La Passerelle", even though it is in place. So those are the type of equations that have had to be met. Others are more difficult but those are the decisions that have had to be made this year. Do you want to say anything on that?

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

Not really. Obviously, we work really closely with colleagues in Jersey Property Holdings and within Treasury and the Exchequer Department to understand the size of the programme but also to prioritise and make sure that we can deliver through the programme. Obviously, we then present that to Ministers to make the decision about what the final programme looks like.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Plus I will say some of the projects that have been "delayed" do have some work that will be happening. I think it is Le Squez, for example.

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

Yes, Le Squez is a good example. We have done quite a lot of work on Le Squez and it has been moved towards the end of the programme. We will continue to work up the plans for that and get that ready. As the Minister says, maybe there is an opportunity to reshape the programme as we move through. But we also have to be mindful that there is work that is needed on the site. We still obviously have the youth and community centre there that we would like to invest more in, which is at the heart of the project, but there is further work that needs to be done on Samarès School as well and also within the outside play area. So it is not that we are just simply walking away. We have an active view on those and we will look to maintenance budgets to see if we can make some improvements as well to those areas.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

You might be going to ask the same thing, just to say what might actually happen at the Le Squez site soon and what might go ...

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

So we actually have a meeting on site tomorrow to look at the outside area. If you know the school and you know the area behind the youth and community centre, we would certainly want to see some improvements made there. So we will have to come back to the panel to inform you of what is going to be achievable within the budgets that we retain and also looking at the landlord, J.P.H. (Jersey Property Holdings), budget, too. So we will have a look there. As I mentioned about the school, we are looking to do some improvements there because the school is growing as more families return to the area once the developments have happened. We are looking at the demographic projections for that catchment at the moment, and if we have to extend the school slightly to enable more children to go in, then that is a proposal we will take to the Minister to make a decision on about use of funding in 2025. There will be a point where you are going to ask us: "What is your plan for 2025?" and we will bring that to you within the budget that we have available. Obviously, the big projects are outlined within the Government Plan, but within our discretionary spend we will have to pick and choose based on the criteria and based on looking through the prism of risk and need to understand where we are going to allocate those funds.

The Connétable of Grouville:

That was actually my next question was about the process for changing the use of funding, especially since it has been outlined in the Government Plan, but I think you have explained that, Keith. Thank you.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Can I just say it is a lot easier for me to sit here and frontload all of these projects in the back of my mind knowing quite full well that a lot of them will not be done. It is a lot easier to do that, but I do not think we should be doing that. I think we should from the beginning be realistic about what can be done, particularly in the short term of a year, 2 years, 3 years, and where we are. The classic example of that is the town school. We do not have the land or the planning permission yet. Over the last 4 or 5 years since the original amendment to the Government Plan I brought to reallocate that land to only be used for a school, that has not happened. We have to get that in place. So the reality is I could sit here and say: "Yes, we have £10 million for the town school." It will not be spent. It will still be here at the end of this year and next year because we will not have the land and will not be able to do anything with it. The reality is to say what can we do now to make improvements and in the background what can we build up and build up so it is in place and, if you like, irrefutable before the next election, which is what I hope to do for the town school. Because there is still some opposition to that school which had to be sorted out. Now, I hope we have gone through that now

and we can now move on with the next stage of that. So that is the model. It is a difficult model. It is difficult to say and it is very easy to criticise. I am quite self-critical about it, to be honest, but that is where we are.

Deputy H. Miles:

Can I just ask a quick question? You have explained about what is doable and you have talked about suspending the bricks and mortar projects, et cetera, but how does that apply to the feasibility studies? Because surely the feasibility studies are just that, you are assessing the feasibility of, for example, La Sente, Victoria College, and that is not about ... you have had money in the budgets previously for feasibility studies. Why can you not go ahead with the feasibility studies?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, we can but they have to be prioritised and we have to make choices on those priorities.

Deputy H. Miles:

So what you are saying is that you have deprioritised those, the feasibility studies as well as the bricks and mortar?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, I think what has happened previously is everything has been a priority and that simply does not work. I could say yes, it is a priority, yes, that one is a priority, that one is a priority; it simply does not work. I think it is about realism. It is about saying, okay, what situation are we in now? What can we do? What is the capacity that we have to make that change and what is the best outcome to what we have? I think if we are smart with this approach we can get more done than perhaps is recognised and we may actually get somewhere longer term. Also I have to say feasibility studies are a lot cheaper than the building but we ...

Deputy H. Miles:

But you have cancelled them.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, which ones do you mean?

Deputy H. Miles:

The La Sente, Victoria College new classroom, Victoria College students, and you have cancelled the music development.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, because they are not ... if you put all of these ... again, you cannot make everything a priority so you have to see what you can get on with.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

If we could move on, I think Mark has another question.

The Connétable of Grouville:

The panel lodged an amendment to the previous Government Plan which asked that the Government review previously approved funding for Le Rocquier School and community sports facilities. What can you tell us about that work that has been done to consider the reprioritisation of that project, considering the lack of public access sporting facilities in the east of the Island?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. Keith, do you want to ... because you have done a lot on it and you can answer a lot of detail and I will chip in where I need to.

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

I think this kind of lends itself to Deputy Miles's question in terms of use of feasibility, but obviously we have to be looking at the prioritisation of the programme. I obviously recognise that this was the amendment put in by the panel. We are continuing our feasibility work on the construction of a 3G pitch for Le Rocquier. That will come to fruition or the next stage of the feasibility study will be completed before the end of the year. We will then go and speak with Ministers about that and we will have to do more detailed costs and then there will be a decision about whether we can put that into the programme or not either next year or the year after based on either reprioritisation within the existing programme or conversations with Ministers about its overall priority. That is one example of a project that does not appear in the plan but we are continuing with the feasibility because we recognise that it is something that has been requested.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Will that be public access, that 3G pitch? Because there is a great deal of demand for ...

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

Absolutely. It is a community facility, essentially for the school first of all but then it is a community facility. That is how we started this and so we would not want ... and a lot of work has previously been done on this and we would not just simply want to stop that. We want to get it to a stage where we have something that we can then take forward to Ministers for consideration.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That is good because there is a real need there, is there not?

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes, there is.

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

Absolutely, and that is recognised by the continuation of the work there.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think if you look at any project there will be a number of people who say it is a real need and it is the priority. Of course it is.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

The east is very ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

No, I absolutely agree with you, but there does come a stage ... genuinely, if we look back over a number of years, I am going to say across government, not just the last 2 years, the last 4 or last 6 years, lots of priorities have been made that were simply not possible. Lots of feasibility studies were undertaken and said yes, that is needed, and then because there has been, if you like, such a build-up of projects they have just simply not been undertaken. I think we have to go through a few years of just trying to get done what can possibly get done. Remember we are also going to have in the background the great big white elephant of a huge build of the hospital at some point, and so that is my concern as much as anything else of actually getting projects built. But we will continue in C.Y.P.E.S. to push for those priorities and I think we have won some of those priorities and La Passerelle is a classic example of that.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Now, Deputy Porée has some questions.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Right, okay. Minister, I am going to ask a few questions around C.Y.P.E.S. and health and safety. So the proposed budget includes the new group head of expenditure for fire safety in C.Y.P.E.S. estate under the sponsorship of the Infrastructure and Environment Department. Can you tell us about the status of fire safety matters on the C.Y.P.E.S. estate and why this funding is required?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. How long have we got left in the hearing? **[Laughter]**

The Connétable of Grouville:

Two minutes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Two minutes. Keith, you might have to take over.

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

Bring me in when you want me to ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The fire safety audit that was undertaken in schools really had an impact and there was a huge amount of money, huge number of issues that had to be addressed. It has been retaken, added some, taken others away, and so the whole issue itself is enormous. There are about 352 outstanding risks. There are 292 that are closed, that have been dealt with. So this is a massive ongoing project. I have to say that when you look at some of the risks that have been identified you do think, you know, is that as big a priority? Are they using standards that perhaps could be looked at again? But then underlying all of that is if there is any risk in schools we have to take it really seriously. So although some of these projects may look like: "Do you really have to do that?" I am afraid the answer is yes because we are talking about the safety of children. I did not explain that as well as ...

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

But that in itself is a priority type ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

Do you want me to come in?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, do you want to deal with the detail because you have been dealing with this?

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

In terms of the budget and why that is under the sponsorship of the Minister for Infrastructure, a lot of the work that we have done over the past 12-plus months has been to ensure that we were mitigating against risks. So we have put a number of different mitigations in place, including waking

watches, which we have in 3 of our schools at the moment. We have safe operating procedures that we have put in. We have had to remove fire loads from certain areas. We have done a huge amount of work in terms of making sure the audit requirements are met in terms of weekly call point testing, monthly fire safety drills, safety checks and so on and staff training, so a big focus. However, to ensure we are able to permanently mitigate, if that is the term, to get rid of the risk, sorry, is probably the better way of saying it, there is a building solution that is required. So there has been a huge amount of work that has been undertaken by officers in Jersey Property Holdings alongside officers in the health and safety and programme and projects team in C.Y.P.E.S. where they have looked across all of the risk and seen if an architectural solution is required what does that then look like, how much does that thing cost, building by-laws, permissions required, and so on and so on. That has got ourselves to a point where we are about to commence a lot of the work that is going to happen, the first lot of architectural change work within schools, and that is what that budget is going to be used for. Then that work will be ongoing into ... starting in 2024 but going into 2025 and probably there might be some in 2026, depending on the more difficult, larger-scale changes that have to happen.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

So if I was to ask ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

An extremely good summary, by the way.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Pardon?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

That is an extremely good summary because we could have been here hours.

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

Sorry, I tried to be quick.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

No, that is good.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Thank you for that. If I was to ask you now if all C.Y.P.E.S. properties meet the relevant fire safety standards what would you say to me?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The answer is with mitigation yes, but that mitigation has to be there.

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

I think some of the mitigation cannot be in place for ever. I would give an example of waking watches. You cannot have people there for ever and also, and this is where schools have been absolutely fantastic, there has been disruption caused to the way they have operated before because of new operating procedures that have been put in. You then get to an absolute change of the building to make it permanently safe. That then means that the operation of those schools can return to what it was before and remove those risks. So at the moment, as the Minister says, with mitigation yes, but we have to make changes, permanent changes, going forward.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Thank you for your answer. Has the function of or use of the buildings by C.Y.P.E.S. been impacted by the risk of fire and insufficient mitigation? I know you have kind of been answering some of that. So has the impact of the risk been due to insufficient mitigation measures, do you think?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I would just say the risk has been identified and it has to be mitigated, simple as that, really.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can I just add ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I am not quite sure I understand the question, if I am honest.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

... that we had a visit to the library and we know that the library has not been able to hold large public events.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. Well, I was trying to avoid that example. **[Laughter]**

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Yes, I was going to wait to ask you that question.

[15:45]

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

If I am honest I am not particularly happy with that example as to what is expected. But yes, you are ...

The Connétable of Grouville:

It is full of books, Minister.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, it is not that, it is just the fact that you have 2 massive doors at the front and I know where one of the fire exits is and I understand why they are saying it. However ...

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

That is an example where we have had to ... we have also had school halls where we have not been able to fill to capacity. We have had to reduce numbers there. There will be other rooms that we used before, inner rooms they are called, where you have to kind of exit into an area, then exit again, which we obviously have to be very cautious of based on the audit, which have been taken out of use. So yes, Deputy, there has been some disruption. Obviously, what we try to do is to work with schools to reduce the disruption as much as possible, but safety always comes first. Until we finish all this work around this there will be some ongoing disruption, but hopefully it is getting less and less as we reduce those risks.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can I just ask then is there actually a timetable on when these building alterations are going to be done?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, there is.

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

Absolutely. We are about to do the first 10 schools within a tender, a lot which is being put forward through work from Commercial Services and Jersey Property Holdings, which will then seek to do a first load of work in those 10 schools. A lot of that work is around replacing fire doors and other such things. Then there will be a second phase and a third phase and so on.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We can let you know what those 10 schools are.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Library?

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

The library is actively being looked at at the moment. I will need to come back with you about a firm date when it is going to be completed, but it will be shortly.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The possible position we have here is that when something is identified you cannot ignore it. I understand the "It is health and safety gone mad" but actually it has been identified. We have to address it. We would rather not be spending money on these things but I am afraid it has to be.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

You said it, safety first really, and that is very important.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Absolutely. Yes.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Thank you for that. I already heard that fire doors has been one of the nature of the risks you have identified. Would you be able to tell us about maybe other possible risks that have been identified?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

They are things like ramps in designs, access ramps.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Ramps? Mobility access?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. Fire curtains. The areas that Keith spoke about where an exit goes through a different space, that space has to be dealt with, I believe, as another fire risk, so it has to be mitigated on its own as a separate way out. I am not an expert in this; the health and safety people are.

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

Fire loading.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Fire loading is the other one.

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

Particularly in corridors which lead to access.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Signage and emergency lighting, emergency escape routes, fixing faulty fire doors, smoke trips, closures.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Perfect. Thank you.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

This is when having the laptop is really useful.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Any issues with building material?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I do not think so much building material, no, to be honest.

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

No. There has been in terms of some of the design of the building, which is where possibly some of the more challenging improvements have to happen in terms of compartmentalisation, but I am not aware. I will ask the question and come back.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

That is reassuring to know.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I do not believe it is anything like a cladding issue because we would be massively concerned about that, obviously. I do not believe so and we will now go away and double check, now you have said it. You have me worried but I do not think so.

Deputy H. Miles:

I just have a few questions about exam results and performance. Last month we saw the publication of G.C.S.E. and A-level results. Are the school exam results used by Government as a measure to review the performance of schools in Jersey?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

They are one element of that but not the whole element, and I would say they should not be. A school is an entity beyond just its exam results. We also have a system that is extremely selective. We have a system where there is growing and specific needs across particularly some of our schools. I think what we need to do when we look at the school review system ... which is being reviewed, ironically, to make that more effective to give a much better overall picture of a school. But in the end if you speak to any teacher they will say: "We want to get good results" and they want to get good results because they are the key to people's future in many ways. So it is not the be all and end all, no, and I really am opposed to any system that is that. It is in my DNA to say: "This is not simply about results."

Deputy H. Miles:

You have that view, but does the analysis actually take place? You know, do results exist?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

Deputy H. Miles:

So you are aware of what your exam results is?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The A-level and G.C.S.E. results, just to say, will not be confirmed by exam boards for a few weeks as there are re-mark requests. You know about this, but just to say publicly. Also any inconsistencies there may be in an exam board. There was one exam board in the U.K. (United Kingdom), and for the life of me I cannot remember what it is off the top of my head, which did an English exam and I think only 21 per cent of the results were 4 and above. I know there were a number of colleges and schools in the U.K. who are just simply questioning that. I think one of our colleges used it. So that could be a wholesale re-marking or not. This is what happens with exam boards.

Deputy H. Miles:

So in general do you publish the G.C.S.E. and A-level results ...?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

Deputy H. Miles:

... across the board? So if somebody wants to know what the results are for a particular school, they are ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It will be on their websites, I believe.

Group Director of Education:

Schools publish the results. We do not publish at the level of each subject of each sat by a school because that would lead to comparisons that simply do not bear scrutiny. In fact, there are no educational systems in England, for example, that would produce that level because you can understand in most subjects it is a single teacher, a single subject at A-level might have a small cohort ...

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Risk of identifying.

Group Director of Education:

You are identifying individuals in a very direct way.

Deputy H. Miles:

They are available if somebody ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

A lot of school websites have them. Can I just say as well remember ... I will say we have a small dataset here. We have to be cognisant of that. That goes 2 ways. If we suddenly get incredible results that are above everything else, I have to say we have to be careful of our dataset. Also if it goes the other way, that do not seem to compare, we have to be careful of our dataset. They are small numbers.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Could I just say, though, if a school is selective and it prides itself on its academic success, then we should be able to see those results, should we not?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I believe you can. The selective schools do tend to put their results on their websites.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

All right, because I do not think I have seen all of them.

Deputy H. Miles:

So the G.C.S.E. and the A-level results we should see?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. As I say, though, you may not see the detail of the results at the moment because, to be quite frank, they are still really to be verified by exam boards. So it might just be a few weeks or months' time.

Deputy H. Miles:

You mentioned the system that we have, particularly the 14-plus and the 16-plus. Is there any work done to analyse the difference in the G.C.S.E. achievement at Hautlieu, which is where you would put your students who have the highest C.A.T. (cognitive ability test) scores, and then their ongoing performance at A-level?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, there is 2 things there. Not all students who have the C.A.T. scores go to Hautlieu or will go to Hautlieu, so we have to remember that. There is a choice.

Deputy H. Miles:

Yes, I understand that.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Second, if you are just comparing Hautlieu with Hautlieu in terms of its A-level results, you need something to compare with, and that is an incredibly small dataset so you have to be really careful. So any analysis that happens has to be meaningful. I think that what we do need to do is be very open in our dialogue in the department about what results are and where they are, but we also have to remember if you have, for example, 5 students taking an A-level in a course in one school and 5 in another - I am just making these numbers up as a comparison - that is a very small number. One student has a bad day, that is a 20 per cent - that was good mental maths - change in their grades. If they move the grade boundaries by 2 or 3 marks ... because they are norm-referenced every day. I have worked for an exam board, so have you, and they do norm-reference exams. They shift the grade, the classic example being people ... somebody can retake an exam 5 times, get the same mark, one year they will pass, 4 years they will not. So we have to be very careful on just raw data. What I hope happens when we review schools is that schools ... we need to give schools the confidence to look at their results and say: "Actually, we think they are absolutely outstanding and these are the reasons why" or: "Actually, we think we can improve and these are the reasons why." I think that is the really key thing, rather than just raw data. Because otherwise all we end up with are headlines as has happened in the U.K. of comparing schools and league tables that are really meaningless. We criticise our young people enough, I think, and I say it again - I have said it about

4 times recently - we are very quick to criticise them. We do not give them credit when it is due and this is the first cohort that had no mitigation for COVID but went through COVID. For their exam results to hold up as they have and do so well, I think we need to give them some credit for that.

Deputy H. Miles:

Thank you for those answers. The next question was going to be about benchmarking, you know, when you have normally got results, you have small samples. We are not the only jurisdiction in that small sample. What are we doing about benchmarking our exam results, for example, with other jurisdictions, Guernsey, islands?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

That has been particularly difficult in the last few years with the way that they took teacher-assessed grades and then they got rid of teacher-assessed grades. There is that in the background we need to be careful of. Is there a particular jurisdiction that we benchmark across? It is difficult in another way as well because I do not think there is many jurisdictions that are as selective as us and have the setup of the States assisted schools with additional funding from parents.

Deputy H. Miles:

I think the bottom line is: how do we know how our schools are performing? How do we know when somebody says: "You have 95 per cent G.C.S.E.s at A to C" but that is ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Whether that is ... yes. It will be 4 to 9 now, yes.

Deputy H. Miles:

Is that where ... where is that that we want to be and, of course, a quantitative analysis of the G.C.S.E.s and A-levels is one way of doing it. I take your point. But how do we know what good looks like?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, we do tend to benchmark, I think, against the U.K. Go on, do you want to ...?

Group Director of Education:

One of the most important benchmarks is for a school against their own prior performance. So detailed work is going on now, September and October, in each school, subject by subject, in drilling down to individual students, did they reach what was expected on their own prior performance or did they exceed that? So we have value-added measures which we use, but schools are interrogating at that level. Going around schools on 17th and 24th August on the 2 results days,

heads were straight away saying: "That subject has performed much better than itself the previous years. In fact, I was thinking about cancelling" or "Interest was dropping off." So that level of drill down is happening now. It is part of the annual self-evaluation cycle that the officers under the Minister in the education team will go into schools. It is also a very significant part about the way we hold schools to account. So every third or fourth year, led by one of His Majesty's Inspectors and other ... depending on the size of the school, off-Island. The Minister is quite right. A school's performance is much bigger than just G.C.S.E.s, A-levels if they have them, the assessment measures in primary education, but those are a really important part of: with your intake, with your cohort, with your resources, should you have got this? We also, if I may drill down, because we put significant investment into school; for example, the Jersey premium. So at that level for groups of children we want to see did it add more value than if we had not bothered to invest in special educational needs and more recently for multilingual learners and low prior attainment. So we drill that down. We do not put everything on the websites because, as the Minister again has said, there are some very small cohorts, some sensitivities, but the rigour is absolutely there.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I will just mention one other thing, though, on that. With low prior attainment, that input and seeing that, we can pick that out. To be fair to schools who ... when you select students who have already high target grades, you cannot go much further. If somebody is predicted 9s across the board, you are not getting any value added because if they get all 9s there is no value added. It comes out as zero, so you end up with less. So we have to be very careful with those indicators and that is why a richer look at what is going on, the quality of teaching and learning, the feedback from the students, where they go to, is important, you are absolutely right. I think there is a question of post-16 and how we do that, I have to say.

Deputy H. Miles:

Yes. Thank you.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So I just have some questions now about food allergy provision in schools. Minister, can you update the panel about work to address food allergy provision in schools?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. At a school level allergen information for each child is held within the school's M.I.S. system. What does that mean?

Group Director of Education:

Management information system.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There is one that I do not understand, an acronym, management information system-system. That is because we have an extra “system” in there. Shared with breakfast and after-school clubs, so after-school clubs and breakfast clubs would know about that. Each individual school will have documentation on how they manage the allergies risk assessment to be put in place for each child, particularly for a child with severe allergies, for example. They might need an epi-pen, for example. The suppliers of our school meals, Flourish, parents order online through an ordering system, at which time they list any allergens for the child and then the system will filter out those meals with specific allergens that are present because Flourish know the ingredients of their foods. Then class lists are printed on a daily basis which also contain allergen information. That is similar for Apetito in primary schools, the other provider, where things are ordered online. One of the real benefits of the ordering online is that those allergens can be inputted and, therefore, foods can be removed from the options given to children in those terms.

[16:00]

I would have to say that more of a risk, and I might be wrong here but I will say it, is on packed lunches because they have to be clearly labelled, the foods that are in them. However, we have to remember that the vast majority of our foods are imported and have labelling systems, for example, from the U.K. So that labelling already exists. But within that the allergen information in schools is the way forward with that.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That sounds good but, however, these incidents do happen where somebody who might go into anaphylactic shock has had something they should not have. So do staff first-aiders in schools have access to auto adrenaline injections like epi-pens? Do they know where they are? Do they know how to use them?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

My initial response is yes, of course, they should. I think older children may carry the epi-pen themselves, I would imagine. I cannot give a detail for every single school, but I would imagine there would be a risk assessment in place for every single child so that that is the case, so that they know where the epi-pen is, how to access it, or they carry it themselves.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Would you be able to confirm that afterwards ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, we will do.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

... that children can carry them as well?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, I want to confirm for myself as well. That is a good question, so thank you for that. Yes, absolutely, because we want to be certain, and also nowadays we know about it. We are much more aware of it. There was a case in the U.K. where I was very surprised to hear that the school did not have an epi-pen. I was really surprised at that. I must admit I read that report and thought: "What on earth was that school doing?" But then you have got to be careful what you read in the papers as well sometimes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Also, these dangerous allergies can develop. They are not always there for the younger child, so if there are epi-pens or similar available ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, absolutely, but you need to be aware of the allergy, though, for the treatment of it, do you not? I think as well that this is ... I could take the plug here and say this is why it is a really good idea for all children in primary school who have access to it to take up on one of the school meals because you know what is in them, you know what they are getting and you do not have to make a packed lunch up in the morning.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

That was a great advertisement. Well done.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Thank you for the advert.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Yes, that was good.

Deputy H. Miles:

Nice plug.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It was fine. Okay, thanks for that.

The Connétable of Grouville:

After some concerns expressed by a member of the public, Minister, we would like a little bit of advice on the transgender guidance. Can you update the panel on the progress of updating sites as transgender guidance for schools, please?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, that is in the process of being updated, that policy. It is being incorporated into the equalities policy which covers the 7 protected characteristics, and they are defined in the Jersey Discrimination Law 2013, which include age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, sex and sexual orientation. So, that is what the basis of that policy will be undertaken with the laws that we have. I would also add - and I will add - we have a responsibility to all of our children, every single one of our children, the 15,000 children that go to school every day, to keep them safe and to listen and to make sure they are safe. It is really difficult for schools because sometimes children might want to have conversations because they are trusting, and we cannot dismiss those conversations and I do not want that to happen in our schools. There is always a need for greater training for staff. There is always a need for greater understanding, but I think our staff do a remarkable job in supporting children every day in what they are going through and there seems to have been a focus of trans for all sorts of reasons. In our society, many different people exist, you know, be it sexuality, there are trans people in our society, and therefore in our schools we have a duty to understand that and support children the best we can as they go through their life stages.

The Connétable of Grouville:

This policy, Minister, when will it be published?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

End of October, if at all ... by half term or the end of October. I am hoping for the end of October, but perhaps at half term. Reason being because of the interest that there has been from particular groups. We need to get this right and we need to make sure that we are certain about what we are saying. I mean personally ... schools went through in the U.K., I think, a terrible time with clause 28 where any talk of homosexuality was seen as promoting and it was ... staff had to go through a process where if a child wanted to come and talk about something that was really difficult for them, they had to say: "No, I am not going to talk to you." That is not right for children. Just because you are talking about it and supporting a child does not mean you are promoting or anything, whether you are supporting a child and that is all it is. It is extremely small numbers of children who go through the challenges in all sorts of ways and they deserve to be supported.

The Connétable of Grouville:

We note that the existing policy was recently removed from the website. Can you confirm if that policy is still in place and accessible anywhere else?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, it would be in place because it has not been superseded yet, but it has been moved in order to look at the content. I think there were some links there that people questioned because there was a group that was undergoing some sort of investigation, so it is not sensible to have that link on the website at all. I think it is best to deal with that early, but the vast majority of the policy is pretty open and simple, which is that they will be supported as we would any other child with any other ... I do not want to use the word issue because it is not about an issue; it is about their reality at the time and the challenges they might be going through.

The Connétable of Grouville:

What stakeholders are being engaged to provide feedback on the guidance update?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Good question. I do not have a list, if I am honest. A variety of stakeholders. I think one group ... there have been meetings with the lead on this which is the ... whose name I cannot remember.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Do you want to provide it in writing?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, we can provide that to you, but it has certainly been a range of stakeholders that have been involved in this because that is what we would do. But again, I am going to say it again, I have said it in the Assembly and I will say it again in the Assembly if need be, I do not want to have schools joining to culture wars of any kind. It is not fair on children. It is not the place for it. If you want to have those battles outside on Twitter and social media, fine, but not in our schools with our children. They do not deserve it. They need to be supported. They are going through ... they are growing up. They are developing. Let children be children and have your battles outside.

The Connétable of Grouville:

In the public hearing on 2nd May, it was stated that some primary schools are implementing floor to ceiling toilet cubicles. Are there plans to expand these facilities to all schools and, if so, what is the timeline?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I would hope so, yes, because they are better facilities. They are basically more private. Some of them are really nice; they have a nice little sink in, so it is just more civilised. Children can go to the loo without worrying about other people being in the room. On a really serious note, they are also a lot better to supervise for staff. When we visit the secondary schools, they would come out on to the corridor into sinks. You can also ... I know if I was on duty and you were on duty, every time they come out say: "Wash your hands. Wash your hands." We would be saying that, but you can also monitor if a child has been there a long time. You know children may have issues. Yes, it is a protection thing. It is a really good step forward. It also means that children are responsible for keeping things clean and tidy, which is very, very good and they cannot be hidden away behind a door, which is the collective toilets, but yes, certainly in primaries it has been useful. I think where toilets are needed ... there was one school that designed their own, did they not, the children? I think it was Samarès. I was very pleased with that.

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

Yes, so where toilets need to be replaced, and toilets do need to be replaced, obviously the head teacher in consultation with the school community will lead the design of those. Some still remain in terms of boys'/girls' toilets. Some have moved to just general toilets.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

In most schools there is both.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Will these changes be funded through existing capital funding for facility upgrades?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

So, this is where we would have some funding available to us for the school estate and, as I said earlier, in terms of priority, if there are some poor toilets that need upgrading, we would obviously be looking at considering funding those.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Okay. What is the guidance that C.Y.P.E.S. provides schools about external agencies coming into schools to talk about matters such as transgender guidance?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

What do you mean?

The Connétable of Grouville:

Some of the agencies that have been going into schools have been ... their suitability has been questioned.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

By whom?

The Connétable of Grouville:

By experts in the field.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Which experts?

The Connétable of Grouville:

I will give you the details.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I would rather discuss that away from here because if you are saying "experts", I would like to know who they are.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I suppose you could say: how are any visiting speakers assessed for coming into schools as well as any subjects?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think they would either be D.B.S. (Disclosure and Barring Service) checked or be supervised while on site. It is a really good question because there is such a variety of groups that come in from ... I think there is an issue for some groups around some groups coming in because they are worried about what is being said. However, I think if a group ... I mean if a group is opposed to an idea and feel that that idea might be discussed, then we have to look really carefully about where that information is coming from or why they have an opposition. I think teachers are very good at making sure that children are safe and are not being - I do not know - indoctrinated. I simply do not accept that that is happening.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can I just add, so when a group comes in, an external agency to talk about a matter, is this decided at the head teacher level or ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. Yes, absolutely.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So, it is not decided by the department but by the head teacher.

Director of Improvement and Transformation:

If we had concerns, though, about a group, we would write to all head teachers, but I am trying to think of an example where that would have happened. But there would also be the values of the school that any external speaker would have to adhere to as well in terms of trying to make sure that very controversial topics would not be discussed because it would not be appropriate.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It has to be age appropriate as well. Some of the conversations would be difficult because young people have concerns and they want to discuss them, and that is always the balance for the school. Should they discuss these issues that are really troubling young people openly, so they have a forum to talk about it and they feel better about it and then they do not worry about it so much, or do we just say: "No, we are not going to talk about that"? That to me, it is like your own children, it is not really a duty of care that you are taking on there because they want to talk to you about it. If children want to talk, you have to let them talk and you have to deal with the difficult conversations. Any teacher who has spent any time in education has, I am sure, come up to very difficult conversations and the thing to do is - and I have certainly done it in my career - I would say: "I do not really know what to say to you about this but let us find somebody who can because I do not want to deny your concerns." That is the most worrying thing. Schools are not hotbeds of ideology trying to turn children into anything. I am sorry, they are simply not. They are places of education and care and concern for our young people and families and that is what they remain in Jersey.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you, Chair.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

You do not want to ask anymore ...

The Connétable of Grouville:

No, I am fine with that at the moment.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So, I think it is now Deputy Porée.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée

Yes, okay. Thank you. So, a few questions about care leavers in education. Please, Minister, could you advise the panel on the top 3 things you intend to do to support the engagement of care leavers in education and skills training? Your top 3 priorities.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, that is a difficult one to say what my top 3 priorities are. The things that are happening and perhaps what we would want to see ... care leavers offer goes up to 25, so if a care leaver ... sorry, are you talking when leaving school at 16 or 18?

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée

At 16.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

At 16, so up to the age of 18, there is a support in school and college. If they are not in school, there is a virtual school offer as well. Beyond 18, which I think ... and up to 18, I think that support is there, and I think that is in place and I think that is good. Post 18, if you go to university, for example, that is when it does get more challenging. However, a young person who is a care leaver will have a personal ...

Group Director of Education:

Adviser.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Adviser. That is right. I was going to say personal assistant but personal adviser, which will help them with some of the basic details of what they need to do in terms of university and so on. They will certainly be eligible for funding. I think there is some additional funding of ... care leavers will be eligible for annual bursary of £900 per annum. Care leaver attends Highlands education, Government of Jersey will fund their tuition fees. They will also be eligible for living expenses grant, currently £8,572 per annum, and an additional bursary of £3,303 per annum. If they go off to university and they are living independently, they will have a home here as well as accommodation in the U.K.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

So, all that is in place?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

All of that is in place.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

So, if you were to go any further to support the care leavers, would you implement something else? Out of all these ideas you put in place, which ones would be your priorities, or you do not have that?

[16:15]

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, that is a really difficult question to answer because I do not know the answer. The offer ...there are 3 things. First of all, the offer that is there must be accessible and easy to access. That, I think, is perhaps the most important thing. If we make an offer, make it accessible, make it easy. As a parent, you make it really easy for your children because you say: "We have your university sorted out. We are doing all of this, and we are doing all of that" and you become bank of mum and dad. As corporate parents of care leavers, we need to make sure that that is in place financially, et cetera. So, that is the first thing I would do, make sure that there is ease of access and that is something that needs to be assessed, but the personal adviser should be overseeing that and if that system is not working, then we need to address that. Beyond that, I think ensuring that there is a home here to come back, ensuring that accommodation in the U.K. is there is really important. I think the most important thing for anybody is to have a stable home, place to stay that is theirs and is safe. Beyond that, I do not know. I do not know if there are any other things that we can think of.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

That is okay. I think in terms of choices for their ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

In terms of support, Carina, you have worked with some ...

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, I think possibly it would be not to have that age limit because I think when you are a care leaver, you are a care leaver, regardless of what age you are.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, it is a good point.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We all mature at different rates and we all experience trauma in different ways, so personally, I would make concessions for those that are care leavers but may find that they are only finding their way later in life.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

So, that is part of choices of whatever training they may wish to ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There are some other things that help with equipment or computer grant if needed for coursework. If somebody who is a care leaver decides to continue education to post graduate level, there is a bursary of £2,000 per annum.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think care leavers in general are ... probably it is a much wider approach across government. I know with my other hat, for example, with the Control of Housing and Work Law, I have had some care leavers approach me about their entitled status, for example, because not all care leavers are necessarily ... automatically become permanent entitled status on the Island, so I think it is a cross-government approach more than just an Education and Lifelong Learning agreement.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

So, would it be fair for me to say now, once you go over the care leavers again, if you see that something really needs to be prioritised, would you come back to us and let us know?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, the care leavers offer is really the Minister for Children and Families, but we meet weekly and if there are issues we will raise them.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Yes, there are issues.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I would also say as well, I mean, there would be some people who might be saying: "Oh, that is an enormous amount of support." Well, it is not. It is just what we would do as parents, and we are corporate parents.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

That is the responsibility.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The financial support is the easy bit, to be quite frank. It is the emotional and wraparound support that needs to be there and that ... because somebody is a care leaver does not mean they do not feel that they are cared for or as valued and they can get that support to access education just like everybody else.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

It is important.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We are in the business of using people's skills, are we not, and helping them reach their potential. That is the really important thing.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

The fact that they are care leavers in itself it says that they are going to need that extra support, not just because they leave that care they should be left, because obviously we need to support them in their further ambition to their future lives.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Absolutely, and I think there have been huge steps forwards in the last 4, 5, years on that, I have to say.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Okay. Thank you for that. I am happy. I was going to ask you a bit more about what the challenges you may have come across with engaging with care leavers in education. Have there been challenges at all?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There are always challenges in education in terms of engagement. One of the areas is young people not in education, employment or training, or N.E.E.T. I do not like that term. We need to look at that term, but they are just ... and how we engage people who may be care leavers, for example, in that area. I think there are a few things about being aware of the risk of that early on and as ex-teachers, there are huge clues from year 9 and year 10 that that might be an issue. There is a really interesting project going on in Liverpool at the moment I have been ... I will mention because it was on the news about trying to intervene early to those who may get involved in criminal activity. Now, that is not what I am saying what this is but looking early on to say: "There is nothing happened yet, but if we intervene now, nothing will happen." I think we have to intervene earlier to say: "There is a risk here." I think that is some of the things we are doing. One of the reasons we are trying to focus on

the La Passerelle Secondary is because we have too many students at the moment who are being educated in a way that I would not want them to be.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Really interesting, but we had better stick to the questions because we have only got about 10 minutes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Sorry, sorry.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Yes, and I was just going to say that would be leading to my next question in terms of data, how you gather your information, but something that you could come back to us on that, please.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. Yes, absolutely. There is an increasing amount of information and data on that because it has become an area of focus, which is good.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Because it will help you to measure the success of any actions you may take and to measure and, again, to work towards feedback mechanisms and what to put in place so that would be good to have a return to this issue.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Absolutely. If you get it right the first time, you have much more success longer term and that is what we want to do.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

Okay. My last question, Minister: how will the Government ensure effective co-ordination and communication between different teams and services to deliver good education for care leavers?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Okay. Well, first of all, it is that identification and awareness. It is an identification and awareness of the care leavers offer, which I think is really important and I hope schools are aware of that. I believe they are increasingly aware of it. It is also about being respectful for somebody who is in care. They may not want it to be an issue in school. They might want to just say: "I am doing well in school. I want the support" and they know where the support is, know where they can turn to. That is what being a corporate parent is, there to turn to at the time when you need it. It is pretty

simple as a parent, you are there ... well, it is not simple, it is incredibly complex, but it is also for a corporate parent as well, so I think there is that awareness, there is that understanding and there is that ...

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I would say communications across different groups. So, for example, you have the Youth Service as well that play quite a big role in identifying and supporting these individuals and just having that mechanism to be able to share that information and come together.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

They need training as well.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The third sector groups are advocates and as a voice as well are engaged and are listened to. Jersey Cares, for example. Advocacy is certainly met with quite frequently.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

It will take a co-ordinated effort, will it not, with different agencies to come together?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It does, yes, and that is happening but, to be fair, it can always be better.

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:

That is good to hear. Thank you.

Deputy H. Miles:

Thank you. It is me for the final 5 minutes, so my questions were really around student finance and I did have a quantity of questions, so I think we can probably put those in writing about how many applications, how many appeals, et cetera. But I would like to know how you are monitoring the service delivery for the administration of higher education grants and funding support this year and how you are tackling the difficulties.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, I think we visited the student ...

Deputy H. Miles:

Finance team.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

... finance team - sorry, it went out of my head - the other day. We had a really good conversation with them. I think there has been significant improvements in the delivery. They send us weekly, monthly information on the number of outstanding number of applications, number that have been assessed, number that have been given, the number that have been appealed, what is happening with those appeals, and I think that is working well. I think there has been significant improvements in that area and, in terms of the grants themselves, I do not think we have had the situation for the last 2 years where there have been huge backlogs in issuing the money to the universities, people getting there and just not having their money. I have to say that some credit has to be given to the team for that and it was really nice to have those conversations. There were still blips. There are bound to be, but they are working well.

Deputy H. Miles:

So, can you describe the policy around the financial support that is available for people who want to do their higher education via distance learning?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. Well, in the next ... I am about to announce a project and a model for distance funding. I would appreciate if you would give us a couple more weeks just to cross the t's and dot the i's to ensure that what we are doing is okay in terms of providers and so on, and that would give a really clear model of a way to access distance funding and the funding model of it. At the moment I know that the thresholds are very low for distance funding and also it is 80 per cent of the normal cost. That needs to be looked at, but also distance learning can be less expensive if it is done appropriately with the right group and in the right place. I am very pleased with what we are doing, and I think it is a really good model and I think it is something we can move forward. The distance learning numbers are not significantly high but the reason I am opposed to just opening up to absolutely everything is that I think we need to look at quality so that people are receiving quality distance learning. There is a difference between distance learning and online learning. Distance learning is the model of learning from a distance in a structured way. A lot of universities put their lectures online and that is not distance learning, that is just online lectures, and that is what we need to be working on. I am hoping by the end of October I can get something out. There are people working in the back ... I think it is end of October, is it not? I will even make a statement to the Assembly, or we will put a report out or something and you can ask questions about that as well.

Deputy H. Miles:

Just in terms of calculations of student grant awards, can you confirm that the long-term care contributions continue to be taken into account, the calculation of that grant? Is that a technicality you want to go away and look at?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, absolutely.

Deputy H. Miles:

Okay.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Long-term care is probably my least specialised subject after ... I do not know.

Deputy H. Miles:

I think really the rationale for the question is ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, yes, I get it.

Deputy H. Miles:

... long-term care needing support and the like ...

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Somebody that is in receipt ...

Deputy H. Miles:

... as part of the household income upon which the grant is ... that is the thinking around that.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, I get it. I do not think it is large numbers, but I think it is an anomaly that certainly can be dealt with.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, they do, is the answer.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, they do.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

Deputy H. Miles:

Do you think that is fair? Do you have plans to remove that in the future?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is not something that has been at the top of my list because it is not massively occurring but certainly it would be something we can look at. I do not think that is difficult to solve.

Deputy H. Miles:

We will keep following up with you. Thank you.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. In this question of numbers, are you referring to the fact that if somebody is receiving long-term care it counts as an income and goes against the assessment?

Deputy H. Miles:

Yes.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is counted because it is current law so that would have to be looked at, yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We are looking at that law, but bits at a time.

Deputy H. Miles:

It will not affect a huge amount of students ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

No, it will not.

Deputy H. Miles:

... but for those it does, it is about sort of ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is a really interesting point, and we will look at that. Yes, thank you for that.

Deputy H. Miles:

A further one was around ... there has recently been some changes to these 4-year courses, and have you got any plans to review the 4-year courses in future?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is not at the top of my priority list, to be honest. Most of the priorities around this area were made by the propositions that came to the Assembly that we have to address, so it has been somewhat determined for us. The current situation of 4-year courses, if you decide on a 4-year course that is available as a 3-year course, the 4 years would be funded as 75 per cent per year of the 4 allowance.

Deputy H. Miles:

Which is a disincentive.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, yes, but it is clear from the beginning, if there is a 3-year course available that is the course, but there are some 4-year courses if they lead to a professional qualification it will be funded if they are integral to that professional qualification.

Deputy H. Miles:

We have had that question about the pharmacy.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, absolutely.

Deputy H. Miles:

I think the issue is about clarity of what is and what is not funded.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, absolutely. I think as well as we continue to work on lifelong learning, we start to look at the way we are going to target the need of the Island, there will be some adaptation there because it does not make sense, you are absolutely right. If we can identify an area of need and there are 4-year courses available for that need and that is what they are, that we do not fund them. I agree with that.

Deputy H. Miles:

You know we are not dealing with huge numbers, are we?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

No, we are not.

Deputy H. Miles:

We might have a handful of people that go away to do that.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The really good thing is we are dealing with grants that are not paid back and not huge loans, because in the U.K. there are students on 4-year courses who end up with £70,000 worth of debt and I honestly do not know how they are looking ahead.

Deputy H. Miles:

Final question because I am conscious with the time and the Chair wants to finish off. Can you give us your views on how postgraduate study is funded in Jersey?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. Currently, in postgraduate study there is, I think, £120,000 a year allocated for bursaries for postgraduate funding, and it is allocated by an application/interview process. Over the last few years there have been bursaries awarded, 17, 14, 16, so the amount awarded has been around 108, 100,000, 79,000, but that is still ongoing.

[16:30]

Deputy H. Miles:

I am going to stop you there. The mechanics of it, the money of it is fair enough, but what are your views on the way that the postgraduate study is funded?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

If we want to fund all postgraduate funding, we need to fund it. We need to find the money. Compared to just about every jurisdiction, we have a very generous funding system for universities.

Deputy H. Miles:

Undergraduate.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

For undergraduate, absolutely.

Deputy H. Miles:

So, the question is very much around postgraduate because we fund for teaching, we fund for lawyers, but if you want to go and do a masters degree in English you will not get fully funded, you have to apply for a bursary.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. I think we need to look at what that is going to be used for and we need to have some realism in terms of are we going to fund everything? If we are, then that is going to be expensive. We need to find the money somewhere. That is not the priority I have at the moment. The priority is about the uplift of the undergraduate thresholds, how we are going to do that, whether we can do that, which I believe we can do some announcements soon.

Deputy H. Miles:

When do you think postgraduate funding is going to be moved a little bit further up your priority list?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think what we need to do is we need to look at the demand for postgraduate. We need to look at the success of where we are and how many are missing out. If there are significant numbers missing out for reasons ...

Deputy H. Miles:

Financial reasons.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

... and are useful for the Island as well, we have a finite amount of funding and if that means taking money away from other things, we need to look at that really carefully, but we do need to look at the numbers there.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Can I just make the point as well that obviously we had to make some changes on the back of Deputy Gardiner's proposition P.12/2024, so obviously we have limited resources now and we have to concentrate on the commitments that were agreed by the Assembly. So, I do not think it is achievable in this political term to look at postgraduate funding, but it may be something for whoever is in this position to look at.

Deputy H. Miles:

The issue around postgraduate funding, if you need a postgraduate qualification in order to do a particular profession, you then hop on to the undergraduate funding mechanism, but if you do not need the postgraduate qualification in order to get the professional qualification, then you lose out. So, you are severely restricted in choice, the postgraduate students, and we will have professions in Jersey that require postgraduate qualification and yet we are ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

In that case the review on that is if they are ... but that seems to be slightly contradictory because if they are required for a professional qualification, then we fund them. If they are not required for a professional qualification, they are not funded but there are bursaries available that can be applied for.

Deputy H. Miles:

Yes, but the bursaries do not fully fund the fees, and they certainly do not fully fund the subsistence requirements, so we are funding people to do ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

But that depends on income as well.

Deputy H. Miles:

We are funding ... well, you still will not get your full fees for a postgraduate qualification. The maximum you are allowed for the bursary is £10,000 a year but if your postgraduate masters in English costs you £20,000 and it is going to cost you £12,000 for your subsistence, you, as a postgraduate student, have no access to funding because you would have no access to the U.K. postgraduate funding loan. So, what I am talking about is the equity in this. We are funding the undergraduate and some of these students are getting 2.1s, they are getting firsts and would clearly be able to slot into good postgraduate courses, but there is no funding available to them outside of Jersey bursary.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Because a choice has to be made at some point as to what level of funding ... so let me give an example, 2023/24, 43 students studying postgraduate courses. The total tuition fees were £268,000, maintenance £228,000. That is £496,000 if we are going to fund every single postgraduate course, and ideologically would we want to do that? Yes, of course, but we are probably going to need to come up with another £2 million, and that is fine but we need to fund that.

Deputy H. Miles:

I think the point that I am making is that there is a disparity between postgraduate courses.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There is a disparity between postgraduate courses, yes.

Deputy H. Miles:

If you want to do a masters in English or something else, you have no capacity of making that application to you as the Minister and saying: "I want to do this", because the maximum you are

going to get is £10,000, which is insufficient to fund and it is not just English, it is things like psychology ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, and so we get to the stage ...

Deputy H. Miles:

It could be things like criminology, things that would be useful.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, then we get to the stage as to our choice on how much we are going to fund.

Deputy H. Miles:

Which was why the question at the beginning was what are your views on it.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. Well, the view is that it would be lovely to fund everything, but we have to fund it and while we have a low tax, low spend model in our economy, if this Assembly would vote for changes in our tax policy, so removing the caps on things, having one form of taxation, then we would have a large income and that is the type of thing we could fund. But we do not do that, and every time that has been brought to the Assembly it has been rejected. That is one of the outcomes of that, that these choices have to be made. Now, I would absolutely support that, but the reality is we have to fund it and when we make those choices at the moment, what we have is a system whereby if it leads to a professional qualification it will be funded as a postgraduate and moving on, so medicine for example, and those priorities have been made. If we want to change those priorities, yes, it is a great debate, but we need to find the funding from somewhere. But as Deputy Alves has said, our priorities have somewhat been made by the Assembly. My first week in this Assembly into this role, I had to deal with a proposition that determined what we were going to do over this year. We have responded to that, and we have responded to it positively. So, for example, with distance learning rather than open up all distance learning, which may have cost us a lot more money and made even more demands on postgraduate funding, may have had impacts there that we did not want, we have had to deal with all of these issues, and we will do going ahead. But at the moment it is really nice to have, I agree with you, but we need to look at the funding model of that if we are going to move that forward.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. So, I think we have gone past our time. We have one more question or questions around dyslexia and support for children who are not yet reading and writing, so I can send that perhaps to you.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, please do.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

We have a number of others there you have said we will get something back in writing.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, absolutely.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So, I think we draw it to a close and thank you.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Just to say thanks very much because it is really good and some of the questions, that is what we want to look into, areas where we are ... that is great. Thank you.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. All right. Thanks, everybody.

[16:37]