

# STATES OF JERSEY



## **PROPOSED GOVERNMENT PLAN 2024- 2027 (P.72/2023): TWENTY-FOURTH AMENDMENT**

### **EXPANDING EARLY YEARS NURSERY PROVISION AND CHILDCARE SUPPORT**

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Lodged au Greffe on 28th November 2023  
by the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

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STATES GREFFE

PROPOSED GOVERNMENT PLAN 2024-2027 (P.72/2023): TWENTY-  
FOURTH AMENDMENT

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**1 PAGE 3, PARAGRAPH (I) –**

After the words “Appendix 3 to the Report” insert the words –

“; except that on Page 10, after the words “especially our most vulnerable, can thrive.” should be inserted a new bullet point –

- “We will review feasibility options for expanding Early Years nursery provision and childcare support to benefit all children in Jersey from nine months to three years old, with a report detailing any action plan from the Government to be presented to the States Assembly before 1st September 2024, and any financial implications forming part of the Government Plan 2025-2028.”

**CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND HOME AFFAIRS SCRUTINY PANEL**

**Note:** After this amendment, the proposition would read as follows –

**THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –**

to receive the Government Plan 2024 – 2027 specified in Article 9(1) of the Public Finances (Jersey) Law 2019 (“the Law”) and specifically –

- (a) to approve the estimate of total States income to be paid into the Consolidated Fund in 2024 as set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 1 to the Report, which is inclusive of the proposed taxation and impôts duties changes outlined in the Government Plan, in line with Article 9(2)(a) of the Law;
- (b) to refer to their Act dated 30th September 2016 and to approve the application of existing resources for work on the development of ‘user pays’ charges in relation to all aspects of waste, including commercial and domestic liquid and solid waste;
- (c) to approve the proposed Changes to Approval for financing/borrowing for 2024, as shown in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 2 to the Report, which may be obtained by the Minister for Treasury and Resources, as and when required, in line with Article 9 (2)(c) of the Law, of up to those revised approvals;
- (d) to approve the extension of the use of the existing Revolving Credit Facility to include the provision of funds that would otherwise be implemented through bank overdraft or bank overdraft facilities under Article 26 (1)(a) of the Law, should they be needed, subject to the limits outlined in that article;

- (e) to approve the transfers from one States fund to another for 2024 of up to and including the amounts set in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 3 in line with Article 9(2)(b) of the Law;
- (f) to approve a transfer from the Consolidated Fund to the Stabilisation Fund in 2024 of up to £25 million, subject to a decision of the Minister for Treasury and Resources based on the availability of funds in the Consolidated Fund as at 31 December 2023 in excess of the estimates provided in this plan, or from budgeted underspends identified before 31 December 2024;
- (g) to approve each major project that is to be started or continued in 2024 and the total cost of each such project and any amendments to the proposed total cost of a major project under a previously approved Government Plan, in line with Article 9(2)(d), (e) and (f) of the Law and as set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 4 to the Report;
- (h) to approve the proposed amount to be appropriated from the Consolidated Fund for 2024, for each Head of Expenditure, being gross expenditure less estimated income (if any), in line with Articles 9(2)(g), 10(1) and 10(2) of the Law, and set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Tables 5(i) and (ii) of the Report;
- (i) to approve the estimated income, being estimated gross income less expenditure, that each States trading operation will pay into its trading fund in Page – 3 P.72/2023 2024 in line with Article 9(2)(h) of the Law and set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 6 to the Report;
- (j) to approve the proposed amount to be appropriated from each States trading operation’s trading fund for 2024 for each head of expenditure in line with Article 9(2)(i) of the Law and set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 7 to the Report;
- (k) to approve the estimated income and expenditure proposals for the Climate Emergency Fund for 2024 as set out in Appendix 2 – Summary Table 8 to the Report; and
- (l) to approve, in accordance with Article 9(1) of the Law, the Government Plan 2024-2027, as set out at Appendix 3 to the Report, **except that on Page 10, after the words “especially our most vulnerable, can thrive.” should be inserted a new bullet point –**
- **“We will review feasibility options for expanding Early Years nursery provision and childcare support to benefit all children in Jersey from nine months to three years old, with a report detailing any action plan from the Government to be presented to the States Assembly before 1st September 2024, and any financial implications forming part of the Government Plan 2025-2028.”**

## REPORT

The purpose of this Amendment to the Proposed Government Plan 2024-2027 is to:

- ensure that the feasibility of affordable nursery provision and Early Years support is being explored for *all* children in Jersey from nine months to three years old; and
- obtain a commitment from Government to publish a report on its findings and plan for action, including a timeframe.

### **Ministerial Plans**

The Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel (the ‘Panel’) highlights that the proposed Amendment aligns with the published Ministerial Plans for 2024, which include the following new priority for the Minister for Children and Education:

- *developing a strategy to offer affordable and also targeted free nursery provision for children aged from 9 months.*<sup>1</sup>

This is in addition to an existing priority for the Minister for Children and Education listed in the Ministerial Plans for 2023, namely; *“identifying and implementing a model of early years services that is child-centred, equitable, efficient and affordable that can deliver very good outcomes for all children and families.”*<sup>2</sup>

### **Affordable nursery provision and targeted nursery provision**

The Panel wanted to understand how the Government planned to extend the nursery provision and Early Years services to benefit children, aged from nine months to three years old, to deliver the newly established priority. Currently, children aged between three and four years old can attend 30 hours per week (in term time this is extended to 38 weeks) at a nursery, funded by the Government of Jersey through the Nursery Education Fund (NEF)<sup>3</sup>. There is therefore a gap to be addressed in the provision of nursery and Early Years services, for children between the ages of nine months old and three years old, if the Ministerial Plans for 2024 are to deliver on this new priority.

The priority does not appear to be reflected through funding sought in the Proposed Government Plan 2024-2027, but the report accompanying P.72/2023 provides a brief reference on page 10 under the heading ‘*Helping children and families*’.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the Panel sought to establish how the work to develop this priority would be progressed.

In a public hearing on 31st October 2023, the Panel heard that approximately 95 families with children aged between two to three years old had been supported in 2023, through £450,000 of targeted funding for Early Years services. It was explained that it had been proposed that this funding increase by a further £50,000 for 2024.<sup>5</sup>

In response to queries from the Panel about how the nursery provision would be targeted, the Minister for Children and Education advised that further work was being done to establish the best way to target the support and advised:

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<sup>1</sup> ‘[Ministerial Plans 2024](#)’, Government of Jersey, p.14

<sup>2</sup> ‘[Ministerial Plans 2024](#)’, Government of Jersey, p.14 and ‘[Ministerial Plans 2023](#)’, Government of Jersey, p. 12

<sup>3</sup> [Free early learning for your child \(Nursery Education Fund\) \(gov.je\)](#) (accessed 23/11/2023)

<sup>4</sup> ‘[Proposed Government Plan 2024-2027 \(P.72/2023\)](#)’, p.16 (of pdf) / p.10 of attached report

<sup>5</sup> [Transcript](#) – Public Hearing with the Minister for Children and Education – 31st October 2023, p.19-21

*It will be policy development but currently we are looking at children with special needs and they do need support from birth, from early age, and the earlier we will give support the better. This is why it is targeted. We are looking at the group specifically from deprivation, from the family that is living in more difficult conditions. We cannot offer immediately universal for everyone, and to see how we can also support working parents as well and to allow people to go back to work if they wish.<sup>6</sup>*

Regarding timescale, the Minister advised that the initial priority was to focus on increasing the targeted offer of 38 weeks nursery to some two- to three-year-olds.<sup>7</sup> It was emphasised that the support would *not* be universal for all two- to three-year-olds.

During earlier quarterly public hearings the Minister for Children and Education and Assistant Minister for Children and Education with responsibility for Early Years Policy, advised that work to review the funding of Early Years was a long-term piece of work and emphasised the importance of evidence-based changes, stakeholder involvement, and consideration around the staffing and places available in the sector.<sup>8</sup>

### **Why does the Panel think that this Amendment is needed?**

The Panel has identified a gap between the ambition of the Ministerial Plans and how this is reflected in Government Plan funding for future delivery.

Through the published response to [WQ.371/2023](#), the Panel also noted that a revenue growth request for “*Early Years (nursery, literacy and therapies)*” had not been approved for inclusion in the Government Plan for 2024.<sup>9</sup> Through the Panel’s review, it established that the revenue growth request titled ‘*Investment across CYPES frontline services*’ in the sum of £2.6 million, included consolidated funding from parts of various unapproved funding requests. From further enquiries, it is not yet clear how that £2.6 million funding would be allocated throughout the Department for Children, Education, Young People and Skills (CYPES) and what amounts would be assigned to Early Years, but the Minister has indicated that the specific plans for Early Years would be considered as a part of this.<sup>10</sup>

The Amendment does not seek a further funding commitment for 2024, however, it recognises work that the Government of Jersey is already doing in the Early Years sector and asks for a public update with regards to feasibility for further support for a wider group of children aged nine months to three years old in future years of the Government Programme. The Panel believes that this approach would be in the interests of the public and beneficial to the Island’s families and children.

### **Cost of nursery childcare**

The Panel’s own desktop research has indicated the following price ranges for fulltime nursery places (i.e. Monday – Friday, typically 7.30 am – 6 pm) in Jersey **per week**:

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<sup>6</sup> [Transcript](#) – Public Hearing with the Minister for Children and Education – 31st October 2023, p.21

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> [Transcript](#) – Quarterly Public Hearing with the Minister for Children and Education – 28th September 2023, p.43

<sup>9</sup> [WQ.371/2023](#), p. 3

<sup>10</sup> [Letter](#) – Minister for Children and Education to CEHA Scrutiny Panel – 24th October 2023, p. 9

Age	Lowest cost (full day / per week)	Highest cost (full day / per week)
0-2	£395.00	£517.40
2-3	£372.41	£475.85

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The Panel surmises that this cost is a significant pressure for families with young children and would likely be a significant factor for parents and families with regards to the choices they make for a childcare and work balance.

### Petitions

Furthermore, the Panel has noted two public petitions in the past year calling on the Government for additional support in relation to Early Years childcare, namely:

- Introduce 20 hours free childcare for children from nine months old – received 1,822 signatures (closed 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023) – Ministerial response was provided on 19th April 2023.<sup>12</sup>
- Government to subsidise the costs of childcare to enable women to return to work – received 1,766 signatures – Ministerial response was provided on 30th October 2023.<sup>13</sup>

The Ministerial response to both petitions referenced the ongoing policy development, and the complexities and challenges regarding this work. The number of people engaging with this matter by signing the petitions indicates to the Panel that there is public interest in this topic.

### Children and Families

The Panel suggests that the impact of this amendment would have a positive impact on children’s rights. With reference to one of the priorities of the Government’s Common Strategic Policy, the Panel suggests that it is appropriate for the Government to commit to exploring options for affordable Early Years childcare for all children, in addition to the targeted support, and reporting on this as part of its evidence base for the policy option(s) taken forward rather than exclusively focussing on specific targeted support for certain children, parents and carers.

Furthermore, extending childcare support could have a wider benefit for families. The Women in Work Index 2023, published by PwC, referenced ‘the motherhood penalty’ and highlighted that:

*Affordable childcare is critical in helping to ease the pressure on mothers and families, and reduce women’s unpaid care load. This needs to be complemented with policy solutions that aim to redistribute unpaid childcare more equally between women and men.*<sup>14</sup>

The PwC Channel Islands Women in Work Index 2023 specifically highlighted that:

<sup>11</sup> [Research](#) – CEHA Scrutiny Panel desktop research re fulltime nurse costs (November 2023)

<sup>12</sup> States Assembly Petitions: [Introduce 20 hours free childcare for children from 9 months old](#) (accessed 20/11/23)

<sup>13</sup> States Assembly Petitions: [Government to subsidise the costs of childcare to enable women to return to work](#) (accessed 24/11/2023)

<sup>14</sup> [Women in Work Index 2023 - PwC UK](#) (accessed 23/11/2023)

*In Jersey, full time childcare for under 2s costs approx £440 per week or £21,120 per annum. Making Jersey childcare more expensive than Inner London.<sup>15</sup>*

### Timeframe

Whilst the Ministerial Plans and priorities indicate the work for 2024 and link to the 4-year Government Programme, the Panel suggests that Early Years Policy goals would particularly benefit from having a timeframe attached to it as, for expectant parents and parents of children aged zero to three years old, the length of Early Years policy development is a particularly timely issue.

The Assistant Minister for Children and Education, who has responsibility for Early Years policy, has emphasised that she wishes to take an evidence-based approach to the changes. Whilst the Panel is supportive of this approach generally, it highlights that there is a risk where there is no time bound element to the objective of collecting evidence, this aspect could be a continuous and ever-changing process. The approach may not be beneficial to creating shorter term change that is adaptable to the needs of service providers and service users.

### Conclusion

If approved, this Amendment to the Proposed Government Plan 2024-2027 would not require the Government to agree to expand Early Years nursery provision and childcare support universally, but asks that:

- the Government explores options for universal nursery provision and further early years childcare support for all children from nine months to three years old (rather than considering targeted support only); and
- transparently shares its work, findings and timeframe for any action with the States Assembly and the public.

The Panel believes that agreement to publish the Government's findings and a timeframe for any future action it will allow a clearer picture for parents and prospective parents and help them plan well for their child's first few years of life and assist with their own financial and employment considerations.

### **Financial and staffing implications**

The Panel does not anticipate that this amendment will create additional financial or manpower requirements for 2024. As this expands on an existing Ministerial priority and because there is ongoing work on Early Years policy, the Panel expects that the requirement to produce a report and action plan could be met within current budget and staffing capacity.

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<sup>15</sup> [CI Women in Work Index 2023 | Closing the Gender Pay Gap for good: A focus on the motherhood penalty \(pwc.com\)](#) (accessed 23/11/2023)