

2025.01.21

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour of the Minister for Children and Families regarding outdoor and indoor play facilities (OQ.15/2025):

Does the Minister have a long-term plan for ensuring that children in all Parishes have access to suitable outdoor and indoor play facilities and, if so, will he share details?

Connétable R.P. Vibert of St. Peter (The Minister for Children and Families):

I have asked my Assistant Minister, Deputy Ferey, to answer this question, as he has delegated responsibility for the area.

Deputy M.R. Ferey of St. Saviour (Assistant Minister for Children and Families - rapporteur):

I thank the Deputy for allowing me to answer this question. Currently work is being undertaken on a play strategy for Jersey to assist in developing an approach to play spaces in Jersey that meets the needs of children and young people in the long term.

[14:30]

The strategy will rather focus on available indoor and outdoor play facilities across the whole Island and will be a key document to advocate for long-term plans to ensure that play spaces are available and protected. As part of this work a mapping process will be completed to identify what resources we have, where they are, and our priority in the strategy will be to assess which needs further resourcing or facilities and what they should be, taking into consideration that not all Parishes will need the same facilities. We must have a range of play experiences for children. During the initial stages of this work stakeholders with experience and knowledge of play have been involved. Children and young people's comments on play will also have a key role in guiding this strategy. It is also important to note that there are already green spaces and open spaces for children and young people to enjoy. As part of the mapping process, we want to ensure those spaces are accessible and can be utilised by children and young people, both in the short and long term.

3.14.1 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I thank the Assistant Minister for his answer. Where gaps are identified, who is responsible for establishing and funding play facilities where there are gaps?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

I thank the Deputy for the question. I think what we have already identified is that the play spaces that are available are controlled under ownership and funded by different organisations. They do not come all under the Department for Infrastructure. As we found out at a Parish meeting last night, some of them have incredibly complex ownership and funding arrangements, including insurance arrangements. The reality is there is no one single point that is in control of all of those play spaces. The strategy will seek to harmonise that as far as possible.

3.14.2 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

The answerer may have touched on this already in that answer but the question focuses particularly on Parishes. But does the Minister accept that children of families from all over the Island can use these facilities wherever they are from irrespective of their Parish run? Will he look into maybe if there is a way that the renewing and maintenance of these facilities, which I use, by all Islanders should be partly funded centrally?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

I thank the Deputy for the question. I think what we have already identified is lots of people from around the Island travel to their favourite play space, and we have probably all got fond memories of what our favourite play spaces were. Mine was Coronation Park where there was a big steamroller that had just been planted there and painted, and we had huge amounts of fun on that. I think play spaces have to be appropriate for the young people in that area that are going to use them. We are also looking at the opportunities for pop-up play spaces so that play spaces can be brought to where young people are and encouraged to play. We are looking at Play Rangers to again encourage and facilitate play and teach parents how to play, so, yes, we are looking at all the available options. We are meeting with the Comité des Connétables to get a good understanding of what is available in each Parish and how the Parishes would like to see those developed, but this is going to be a year-long piece of work which I am really happy to be guiding.

3.14.3 Deputy H.L. Jeune of St. John, St. Lawrence and Trinity:

I was wondering if the Assistant Minister could tell the Assembly a little bit more about if this strategy will also contain elements of what kind of play would be expected. What I was disappointed to find when I came back to Jersey with a little older children from Europe was that many of the play spaces are not very imaginative, they are quite risk-averse, bar one new one I think that is quite innovative, but otherwise they do not have the imagination and that kind of sense of adventure as many of the play areas had in big capital cities I have experienced. I am wondering if there is a part element in the strategy to look at that and aversion to risk.

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

Yes, there absolutely is. We went to the school council last week and met with young people to understand their views. Lots of young people mentioned about having a play park which does have an element of risk, of controlled risk, but also they were really keen to make sure that young people with disabilities had access, young people with neurodivergence had the right play spaces for them. The strategy will look at this holistically and in the round and look at what play is available and how we can encourage young people to play better. Now we were speaking earlier about mobile phones, and particularly smart phones, and how we can divert young people from over usage of smart phones. Having really good play spaces is one way to distract people in a pleasant way and undertake activities, more enriching perhaps, and distract them from their mobile devices for a period of time. What I would say is the previous Administration put in place a play policy which has really been the key driver and a fundamental platform for launching the strategy, so I thank the previous Minister and Assistant Minister who was involved in putting that together.

3.14.4 Deputy H.L. Jeune:

Of course, many of us know that when we go to a playground we usually have different aged children trailing behind us. What ages are you looking at within this strategy to ensure that there is a wide range, especially for the older children?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

I thank the Deputy for that question because again she has hit the nail on the head. There is a lack of play spaces for older young people. There are lots of play spaces for younger young people and we need to make sure that as long as children want to play we create those really good play spaces for them. We also need to communicate with Honorary officers and perhaps neighbours who see groups of what they consider teenagers congregating in play spaces and

perhaps being a bit noisy and rowdy. They are still playing and we need to communicate that message that young people need to have good activities to get involved with in order to thrive.

3.14.5 Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North:

First of all, I would like to start with a thank you for the biodiversity government team and for structure officers who support natural materials rather than unnecessary rubber surfaces and they are working really well with natural play surfaces in the government schools.

The Bailiff:

I am sorry, is this part of the question, Deputy?

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Yes.

The Bailiff:

I do have to challenge you on this because it does sound like a couple of statements.

Deputy I. Gardiner:

Fair enough. It was part of the question because I think that the Government is leading a really good way of natural play and not rubber play. I would like to ask the Assistant Minister if it would be part of the strategy and how the Assistant Minister will encourage Parishes that still prefer to work with the rubber than with green spaces.

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

I thank the Deputy for that question. Yes, it is really important that the right materials are used. We have got some really good opportunities with Millennium Town Park and Springfield Stadium to get it right and make sure that we are using sustainable materials and that it is not just rubber and metal. There are lots of other natural fibres that are a really good safe way for children to play, so, yes, I totally agree with that point.

The Bailiff:

We have 55 seconds to go, a supplemental question, Deputy?

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Will government complete the refurbishment of the Sandy ...

The Bailiff:

No, sorry, I was asking Deputy Gardiner if she had a supplemental question. The next person to speak is the Connétable of St. Martin.

3.14.6 Connétable K. Shenton-Stone of St. Martin:

In St. Martin - I am going to blow my own trumpet - we are really innovative [**Approbation**] and we have got a natural playscape. We have got an inter-abled playground for neurodiverse children, we listened to the Youth Parliament so we have got a Viking swing that I think Deputy Jeune ...

The Bailiff:

Connétable, there is 25 seconds to go.

The Connétable of St. Martin:

Sorry. Will Deputy Ferey and his group come and visit us, please, because we would like to welcome him to see what we have done?

Deputy M.R. Ferey:

In all our conversations, St. Martin is held up as a beacon of light [**Laughter**] when it comes to play spaces and we certainly intend to replicate that model where it is appropriate for the environment where the play spaces can be situated.

The Bailiff:

Well on that lighter note, we have reached the end of the time for questions with notice. That leaves 2 questions unanswered and, in the usual way, I would invite those who were to respond to file written answers if they feel it is appropriate to do so. There is one further question, Deputy Doublet, which you raised by way of an urgent oral question. I will allow - which I have allowed for all of the questions thus far on a normal division into the numbers - 8 minutes for this particular question in the usual way. Would you like to ask your question?