

## **Jersey Child Care Trust's Comment to Education Department's Announced NEF Cuts**

The Jersey Child Care Trust (the Trust) would like to comment on the recent announcement by the Education Department proposing cuts to the 20 hours Nursery Education Funding (NEF) for those parents earning over £75,000 a year. The universality of access to nursery education is an important principle that the Trust supports. There is a wealth of research and evidence now which shows that this makes the biggest difference with the return on investment ultimately benefitting the whole of society for many years to come. Locally, we have seen some relatively recent and encouraging steps, taken by our Government, to place some focus on services working together to meet the needs of our youngest citizens in their first 1001 days of life and their families.

The current economic climate, however, presents some difficult decisions that have to be made and whilst the Jersey Child Care Trust would prefer the focus of cuts to be on anything but the health, care and education of our next generation, we can appreciate that every department must contribute towards those cuts.

The JCCT has heard through the media and also directly from the many parents who have contacted us this past week that there is a considerable strength of feeling against this proposal. The proposed changes are not currently aligned with the Chief Minister's commitment to the 1001 Critical Day Agenda and any development which threatens to decrease choice and availability for parents in the crucial area of early years, is in the Trust's view, a retrograde step.

The current NEF hours represents an important easing of financial pressures on our working parents, including those earning more than £75,000 a year. For full time working parents, these 20 NEF hours provide some financial support, having already paid the full cost of childcare up to this point, however most parents are still required to fund up to a further 30 hours a week during the term time, in addition to the full time hours for 14 weeks of school holidays.

The Trust would like to be reassured that sufficient consideration has been given to the impact that this change will bring. The Trust would question the withdrawal of all the NEF hours at the threshold of £75,000 and would encourage the Education Minister to consider alternatives for a clearer and fairer way forwards for middle income families. Two suggestions from the Trust are to consider a sliding scale of decreasing the funded hours for parents with income between £75,000 to £100,000 and an alternative of setting the threshold at a level of £100,000.

The Trust is very pleased that the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel are questioning the Minister for Education on the 6<sup>th</sup> April giving opportunity to explore this area in more depth. These points will be shared with the Panel and the Minister ahead of this meeting to enable them to be included in their discussions.

Jersey Child Care Trust  
4<sup>th</sup> April 2016

**ENDS**

### **About the Work of the JCCT**

The Jersey Child Care Trust is an independent charity that provides services and information for parents, childcare providers and other professionals in Jersey.

[www.jcct.org.je](http://www.jcct.org.je)