

6. The Minister for Health and Social Services will make a statement regarding the implementation of the Williamson Plan

6.1 Deputy A.E. Pryke of Trinity (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

I apologise first of all that it is a bit long, but I hope Members will bear with me. The Assembly will recall that Andrew Williamson's report in child protection services in Jersey, published in June 2008, made recommendations for change across a wide range of services for vulnerable children and young people and their families. Budget for the implementation of the Williamson Plan has now been agreed for 2010 to 2012. Now that the time for implementation of these long-awaited changes is at hand, I wish to ensure that external, oversight and support remains a feature of this process. We need strong, well-informed leadership to keep service improvements on track while at the same time ensuring that during this ambitious programme of change, existing services to protect and support children and families remain easily accessible and managers and staff are sufficiently free to fulfil their existing responsibilities. I am, therefore, very pleased to announce that Mr. Andrew Williamson has agreed to lead this important service improvement programme. He has the right skills and knowledge to oversee this process and will work closely with colleagues from across the services to ensure that programmes of change are well understood. I have carefully considered and taken on board both recommendations of the original Williamson Report and the comments of the recent Scrutiny Report into services for vulnerable children which I found both interesting and extremely helpful. I accept my responsibility as Minister with a lead responsibility for services for vulnerable children. However, I am very pleased to report that the Ministers for Home Affairs and Education, Sport and Culture who, with me, make up the corporate parent, will in a very re-invigorated and refocused form share with me the task of the strategic leadership and the governance of the Island's services for vulnerable children including those within the Williamson Plan. The corporate parent is an agreement that the single most important elements of the overall process will be the development of the first Children's Plan for Jersey. This will ensure that all services share the same goals and work co-operatively to provide seamless services for vulnerable children and young people. It will form the blueprint for children's services into the future and the means to judge how effective they are. Mr. Williamson will lead the development of this plan, consulting widely and working with key agencies, both States departments and external organisations. I intend to present the Children's Plan to the States Assembly for its approval during the latter part of 2010. I have agreed that Mr. Williamson will give a presentation for States Members and the detail of the implementation programme in early February. In the meantime I am pleased to briefly summarise the key developments for 2010 which will be put in place. Arrangements for external inspection of Children's Services by the social work inspection agency, further independent oversight of services through the establishment of an independent reviewing officer service and the introduction of sustainable funding to support the independently chaired Jersey Child Protection Committee, the establishment of an independent court advisory service to provide a welfare service to the court in private law cases and an independent guiding service for children involved in care proceedings. These developments will help children who receive services, particularly those who are in care, to have access to independent professionals who can help them to represent their views. The need for further initiatives to give a voice to children in a form of an independent advocacy service will be a priority area to be reviewed by Mr. Williamson. I share the view with Scrutiny Sub-panel that this is an important issue deserving careful analysis. In terms of addressing gaps in services identified in the Williamson Report and the Scrutiny Report, there will be substantial investment in the following, a range of psychological assessments and therapeutic services for children and young people, improved social work support services available within schools, improved social work provision for children who have been subject to trauma such as abuse or family breakdown, development of specialist health services for vulnerable children in the form of a medical adviser for looked-after children and to advise the fostering and adoption panels and a

liaison health visitor specialising in child protection, enhanced financial support for voluntary organisations which include Millie's Contact Centre, the Jersey Mediation Centre and Brighter Futures at the Bridge. Additionally, a review will take place of the range of family support and parenting services which currently exist. This will aim to ensure the sustainability of good quality service which provide accessible, focussed support to the most vulnerable families in our community. Current residential provisions for looked after children will be improved. The refurbishment of the Brig-y-Don building to create an environment suitable for the care of vulnerable young people in the 21st century. I am delighted this will enable Health and Social Services to continue the Brig-y-Don tradition of partnership with the trust and providing the high standards of child care in these premises. Future development of residential services will mean that in the future the needs of sibling groups and the most challenging children will be met in a small therapeutic-based unit designed around their specific needs. To help facilitate these changes and to ensure that wherever possible prevention or reception of care is a chosen course, a small intensive support team will be established to provide prompt, targeted response on a 7 day a week daytime and evening basis to meet the needs of young people in difficulty in the community. As can be seen, this long awaited investment has the potential to substantially modernise and improve Jersey's services for children and support and encourage managers and staff who are involved in this challenging area of work. The improvements and the impact go far beyond the boundaries of Health and Social Services and include developments which will have a positive impact upon voluntary agencies, multi-agency organisations such as the Childcare Protection Committee and many States departments. The Williamson Report made it clear it is only by working together across organisational boundaries that we can create the network of services and support necessary to safeguard the most vulnerable children and families in our community. I look forward to reporting progress on the implementation of the Williamson Plan to the House during the course of 2010 and, in particular, to be presenting the Children's Plan to the Assembly so that all organisations can be helped to play a clear and well-defined role in improving the lives of children in Jersey who require support and protection.

6.1.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

I thank the Minister for her commitment even at this late stage in the planning for next year's services. Will she, however, assure the House that she will bring a full breakdown of what has been decided in this financial statement to the House as soon as possible and her financial support for Brighter Futures in particular, does it extend to agreeing the sum that has been suggested by the Scrutiny Report of the full funding of £150,000 per year? Will she support a 3-year package to ensure that people are not spending most of their time raising funds and they are delivering services and thirdly, will she state how much of the £2.8 million here is permanent or how much of it is a one-off payment that we will not see again?

The Deputy of Trinity:

There are many facets to that question. I will try and see if I can answer most of them. Regarding funding for Brighter Futures, it is there at a sum of £80,000 and that was agreed with Brighter Futures at the Bridge themselves and that is safeguarded, as I said, and with the other areas like Millie's Centre too. The whole point of this Children's Plan is to look at these areas and making sure that where we go into the future all the services that we provide, not only with Health and Social Services, but across all departments as well as the charitable and third sector, are well funded not only for one year, but in the ongoing process. That is the main commitment and the main source and the importance of a Children's Plan which will come back to the States for full discussion and debate.

6.1.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

If I may, a supplementary. Will the Minister agree to provide the House with a full breakdown of who is being paid what and how this £2.8 million is allocated?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I think that was one of the most important things regarding contracting Andrew Williamson to this job. It is most important that this money, which was approved by this House in the business plan, is well used and used to its fullness and the breakdown will be there.

6.1.3 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Given the job opportunities that this will create, what communication has been had between the Minister's department and the Education Department to inform current students of the career opportunities, the skills and qualifications needed so that we can grow our own and if none, can the Minister give an undertaking that such communications will happen?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I am very much a stalwart of grow-your-own as we begin to grow our own nurses. Most of the new positions perhaps will be in social work and so they will need to be qualified, but I take the Deputy's point and it is something that I will discuss with the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture because grow-your-own is a way forward.

6.1.4 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:

It is good to know that the refurbishment of Brig-y-Don is on its way. In Williamson's original report, he did say that this was a home of excellence for young children. They were the very young. Is the Minister going to endeavour to carry on that tradition at Brig-y-Don because there does seem to be a lacking for the very, very young?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I am very pleased that we have been able to come to agreement with Brig-y-Don and a lot of people have worked hard over finding a solution to a way forward and the money has been invested in doing it up. The whole idea of that Children's Plan is to look because there are the 2 other children's homes - Le Preference and Heathfield - which will need to have smaller units. I cannot give the Deputy the guarantee that it will only be younger children at this point, but I understand what she is concerned about and I will take that on board.

6.1.5 The Deputy of St. Martin:

I too welcome the comments made in the statement, but could I ask the Minister, one of the concerns expressed by Williamson was the effectiveness of the former corporate parent and also Williamson did recommend that there should be a single Minister, can the Minister advise or inform Members what her thoughts are about either having a corporate parent or moving forward to having a single Minister?

The Deputy of Trinity:

The 3 Ministers who make up the corporate parent have been very active and very busy over the last weeks because we all recognise that we do have a responsibility as a corporate parent, and I have been given the task of being the Minister in charge of or leading the corporate parent and I take that responsibility on my shoulders because it is important. The corporate parent will move forward. As I said, we have been re-invigorated and refocused to make sure that the Children's Plan, which will come back to the States for full debate, is right for this Island and it is an exciting future that Health and Social Services and other children's services across other departments, and the community have to make sure that we get it right for the future. Also very importantly that we have got it fully funded and that is one big, big bonus and it is a really exciting time.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

I did ask about the move maybe to a single Minister?

The Deputy of Trinity:

You did indeed. The Williamson Report did identify that it should be one Minister, but as we know we have got a Council of Ministers which are 10 Ministers and we cannot go over the Troy law so that is why Deputy Martin, who is interviewing for a board of governors at Greenfield - which again is an important role - has responsibility for that. It is something that we need to look at in the future, but that is way into the future. I think we have been given the money, I want to take Children's Services into the 21st century and that is my main step for next year. The issue of one Minister may come in the future.

6.1.6 Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier:

In a previous answer to a question it was stated that £3.3 million has been the finance for the Williamson recommendations. Can the Minister confirm that all the funding will be provided to implement Williamson in its entirety and if not, what recommendations will be omitted? Thank you.

The Deputy of Trinity:

The first year is £2.8 million and an extra £200,000 the following year or £300,000, or the other way round, I cannot quite remember, to 2012. The most important thing is that we have got the £2.8 million for next year. We need to get going, we need to get it up and running and again, it is the Children's Plan that we need to put in place not only for 2011, 2012, but for the future and if we do need any extra monies in 2012 and beyond, the Children's Plan and the future will identify that; but it is vital that we get that Children's Plan up and running and brought back to the States and make sure that we get everything in place.

6.1.7 Deputy J.A. Hilton:

I am not absolutely sure that that was the answer I was looking for. [Laughter] My understanding was Williamson had been costed. I am just trying to get to knowing do we, or does the Minister, have the funds to implement Williamson or is it a case that you think you will have to come back to the House for additional funding to implement the entire plan?

The Deputy of Trinity:

The £2.8 million and the extra £200,000 and £300,000 for the years 2011 and 2012 have been approved by this Assembly and so it is in place. I have got it. I think the original Williamson included Lord Laming and that was an extra ... I cannot remember how much that was, but that is in the future and if we need to have it, then that will be discussed. It is a case of taking one step at a time. I have got the £2.8 million for next year and an extra £200,000 and £300,000 for 2011 on top of the £2.8 million and we are in the wonderful position of having the money, having the Plan and now we just need to get on with it.

6.1.8 Deputy A.E. Jeune:

Does the Minister consider it essential to invite Andrew Williamson to the Island to implement the recommendations of his report and is this due to the department not having staff with the necessary skills and is this on a fixed term contract and if so, of what period?

The Deputy of Trinity:

I think it is absolutely right that Andrew Williamson, who was the author of this Plan, who has been in every area of child care across every department, into every charitable organisation that deals with children... he knows what is needed. To be able to get this up and running quickly which is - I would hope that States Members would agree - is vital and is important. He brought his report out in 2008 and here we are beginning 2010. It has taken too long for various reasons and it is right that he will do it. He is a transitional director, he is contracted on a short term basis and one of his views will be to put in place a Director of Community and Social Services to

continue this work. Having Andrew Williamson do that role enables the service to carry on as per usual, meanwhile changing it so that the children, all children in our care, are fully protected.

Deputy A.E. Jeune of St. Brelade:

A supplementary please?

The Deputy Bailiff:

The 10 minutes has expired, I am afraid, Deputy. That brings Questions to an end.