

2.4 The Connétable of St. Helier of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding the range of day time activities provided by his Department for children over the age of 12 during the school holidays:

Would the Minister explain what daytime activities for children over the age of 12 during school holidays, half terms and public holidays are provided by his department and is he satisfied that he is currently making sufficient provision?

Senator M.E. Vibert (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

My department provides activities available to children over the age of 12 during school holidays in a variety of ways. The Youth Service, although it mainly works during term-time weekday evenings, offers a range of provisions targeting young people aged 12 to 18 years. It does, however, offer a range of other opportunities such as Island residential activities, off-Island trips, outdoor activities and various specialist programmes offering specific activities during school holidays. As well as these specialist events, the Youth Service recognises the desire for all the youth projects to be open for more hours throughout the year and to extend their opening hours into school holidays, half terms and weekends where possible. With this in mind the Youth Service has increased the amount of sessional youth workers' face-to-face hours during the last few years from 156 per week in 2005 to 260 per week currently and the Youth Service hope to increase this even more in 2008, especially for additional projects being offered in the school holidays. In addition to this increase in the core face-to-face hours offered by the Youth Service, there have been a number of significant new partnerships with Parishes developed during the last year which have led to additional opening hours of youth projects. I am extremely grateful for this support from the Parishes. It certainly makes a significant difference to what the Youth Service can offer young people. Also the Sport and Leisure Division of E.S.C. (Education, Sport and Culture) works with sports' governing bodies to co-ordinate and advertise a comprehensive range of sports activities for young people during school holidays. These activities are for children from 6 years and above. Activity clubs, formerly known as play schemes, are organised for 6 to 11 year-old children. In 2007 a club was set up for those over 12 years old. This only had 3 young people signed up so the club was merged with another group. Also, since 2006 my department has employed a community development officer with funding from Building a Safer Society. In 2007 15 different projects were delivered at 20 different venues across the Island; over 11,200 from 8 to 18 years old attended these programmes during term time and the holidays. I believe my department is providing excellent opportunities in this area.

2.4.1 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I thank the Minister for his answer, although it was somewhat vague. Could he perhaps tell me, either now or circulate the detail, and just to help him could he tell me what specific daytime activities were made available for the over 12s during the recently finished half term?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

In answer to an oral question I thought I was trying to be as concise as possible with giving the actual information. If the Constable wants to know what was on offer at any specific time, if he would like to submit that to me in writing, as a written question, or at any time by just contacting me we will look into it and provide it but I cannot give him off the cuff what all the activities were that we offered at any one time. For example, the summer activity holiday programme for 2007 is a booklet here which, as Members can see, contains an enormous amount of information - an enormous amount - over 100 different courses and activities on offer. So I do not think that I can give the detail the Constable wants. I think he was vague in his question. If he wanted to know what happened last half term he should have asked me.

2.4.2 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I take the Minister's point but I did just ask him a specific question about half term. I would be grateful if he could furnish me with the answer to that question.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Certainly, Sir.

2.4.3 Deputy F.J. Hill of St. Martin:

It is pleasing to see that so much work is being done by the Education, Sport and Culture Department. Is the Minister able to give us a breakdown, or even an overall figure, of the number of people taking part as a percentage of those who do not take part?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Sorry, Sir, I did find that question slightly vague. What age group, what period, which activities? Then perhaps I can answer it.

2.4.4 The Deputy of St. Martin:

I will make it quite simple. The Minister has told us we have got a number of activities. Is it possible to give us a breakdown of the numbers that are going compared with those who are not going? Obviously we have got several hundreds of children who are of that age group. How many go and what percentage of that do not go?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

That would require considerable work on our part. It could be done. There are also a number of other groups, Scouts, other activities. There are a whole load of activities and, of course, parents do have some responsibility in this regard and most parents make sure they know what their children are doing in holidays and half terms and make arrangements for them.

2.4.5 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Could I just make it easy? Would the Minister say that these courses are very well attended and they are to be encouraged for others to come along?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I get the gist of the question now. Yes, most of the courses are very well attended; sometimes we have to put on extra areas where we can in some areas because they are so well attended. However, as I said, when we have offered some of our activity courses for over 12 year-olds, some of them have been very poorly taken up. Others, depending on the activity, have been well taken up.

2.4.6 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Are we to infer from the Minister's reply that there is going to be more youth club provision during school holidays?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Yes, Sir.

2.4.7 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Can the Minister outline the nature of that provision?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Yes, youth clubs will be open more often during school holidays. **[Laughter]**

2.4.8 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Can we stop the game playing? How much money and what percentage increase in opening will occur?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I hope the Deputy was listening when I gave my first answer where I talked about the sessional hours and the increase in them and working with the Parishes. Each individual youth project has its

own plans and is developing them and we will, as and when possible, increase where we can. I cannot give him percentages for each youth club but, as I said, we are going to open more as and when we can, with budget restraints and with support from the Parishes, in the school holidays as well as in school time.

2.4.9 Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier:

I am glad the Minister mentioned budget constraints. Would he not admit that Education do seem to look at the play schemes as up to 11s - over 12s are not normally permitted - and this normally goes on a sliding scale of the income of the parent or parents, which he also mentioned flippantly that most parents will make provision for their children in school holidays? Some single, low income parents have a very hard time knowing where their children are. My question is the activity book that the Minister just kindly showed the House, could he inform us if any of these are subsidised to low income parents? If not, can he please hurry and make sure that these are all inclusive and not barred through income, which I think at the moment is the case.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

The Deputy is mistaken, which I am very surprised at as she used to be a member of the E.S.C. Committee, because we have a system in place whereby if we are approached by anyone who wants their children and for financial reasons cannot access any of these activities we make every effort to ensure that they can access them.

2.4.10 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Sorry, Sir, the Minister accuses me of not knowing. He just said if they are approached by anyone who cannot possibly afford for maybe one or 2 or 3 of their over 12 year-old children they will look into the case. We need a States policy. We do not want people having to go to the Education Minister or one of his departments if they think this is available. Will the Minister put a proper policy in place for over 12s and people on low incomes? It is not rocket science. I can show him some stuff I have just brought back from the U.K., very similar to Active Card. It is called Aspire and they do it for children over the age of 10 and it is for all different areas of income - unemployed, low incomes, single parents. Not rocket science.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I accept it is not rocket science and we do offer and try to help out with those in need. I am obviously constrained by budget provisions and if the Deputy wants to propose an increase in my budget I will obviously welcome it but I do not remember her doing that. We, with the Active Card, were really looking - and I have been in correspondence with the Deputy - at trying to offer more activities linked with what the Active Card offers for those between 12 and 16. As I said before, when we have offered activities for over 12s in many cases they have been very poorly looked up and taken up. A lot of over 12s, with their parents, make their own activities and we have had poor take-up. Some we have had good take-up but we do try to help, we do offer, and within the constraints that I have got I try to make sure that nobody is denied access to our programmes because of financial reasons.

2.4.11 The Connétable of St. Helier:

The Minister has spoken about increased opening of youth clubs during the times of year that I referred to in my question. He has also referred to budget constraints. Is it not the case that the Minister will not be increasing youth club provision unless the Parishes provide the funding?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

No, Sir. I am very pleased that the majority of the Parishes, including St. Helier, work with us in partnership and I thought the Constable understood that. The partnership is that we put money in and they put money in and, despite budget constraints, over the past 3 years I have substantially increased the Youth Service budget.

