

STATES OF JERSEY

Health, Social Security and Housing Panel Co-ordination of Services for Vulnerable Children Sub- Panel

WEDNESDAY, 6th MAY 2009

Panel:

Senator A. Breckon (Chairman)
Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier (Vice-Chairman)
Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour
Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier
Mrs. C. Le Quesne (Scrutiny Officer)

Witnesses:

Mr. A. Williamson

Senator A. Breckon (Chairman):

Welcome. I will do the introductions and why we are here. We are following some of the work that you have done under the Health, Social Security and Housing Panel, of which I am Chairman. We have set up a sub committee which is to look at the co-ordination of services for vulnerable children. My name is Alan Breckon and I am Chairman of the panel. The Vice-Chairman is Deputy Trevor Pitman and then Deputy Geoff Southern and Deputy Roy Le Hérissier, are the other members. It is not just some of the work that you have done it is sort of wider and we are up against some time pressures to produce a report in the second week in June so the States can proceed with a debate on 30th June on the funding issues associated with some of the work you have done. But, first of all, I would like to thank you for being able to fit us in today. You were here for something else so we bought one and got one free, as it were. But thanks for fitting us in at fairly short notice anyway. The reason we tape this, as I say, is mostly for our own benefit but it is also becomes a matter of public record well. It is not a means of entrapment it is a way of recording the process. Anyway, could you begin by perhaps introducing yourself and a little about your background for the benefit of the tape.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Thank you very much and thank you very much for inviting me to see you this afternoon. I am very pleased the timing has worked so well. I am Andrew Williamson. I have been in childcare and social work, all my working life. I became a childcare officer, which gives you an idea of my age ... I started off working in a children's home and then I became a childcare officer and then I moved around doing management experience and qualifications and so on and I was very briefly Assistant Director running Brighton and Hove up to Lewes really and then Deputy Director in West Sussex for the county and then I became Director of Social Services in Devon in 1990. The last 3 years of my time in Devon the County Council allowed me to stand for election to run the Association of Directors of Social Services as honorary secretary and I did that for 3 years. I was linking with government - Lord Laming, although he was not Lord Laming then - on a daily basis almost because he was the chief inspector. Since then, since 1990, I have worked for ([government - clarification 14.05.09 various commissions from authorities](#)) on childcare inquiries. I was in Doncaster only a few weeks ago. I also have worked for the Department for International Development. I have helped Romania get ready for coming into the E.U. (European Union) for their children's services. I chair the Primary Care Trust in Cornwall and prior to that I was on the Strategic Health Board.

Senator A. Breckon:

Thanks for that. Then as a result of that you were asked to do some work in Jersey. I wonder if you could just, as an introduction, give us the background to that.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes. I was contacted about the concerns in Jersey that have been raised and came over to see Mr. Ogley and then met Senators and ... I think they were called the Cabinet.

Senator A. Breckon:

The Council of Ministers.

Mr. A. Williamson:

The Council of Ministers, thank you. It is now about 18 months ago. I was given a lot of freedom to advertise and talk to people who wanted to talk to me. I moved into this building away from Cyril Le Marquand House. So, I was given a lot of help and support to produce the report by June last year.

Senator A. Breckon:

That report was about the existing provision of ...?

Mr. A. Williamson:

What happened was that, forgive me if I get the timing ... if I am slightly confused about timing, I do not think I am, but from where I was I remember seeing my advert in the paper and I had had help on the design from people here because we wanted it to be welcoming but not too off-putting. But then it almost kind of tied in with an advert for the police, a similar advert from the police, and suddenly the police inquiry was really rocketing, I think, upwards ([clarification 14.05.09 moving forward](#)). So I then met with Mr. Harper and we clarified my line of accountability in this because what I did not want to do under any circumstances was get in his way and I did not want somebody in 5 years time in court, or whatever, saying: "Well, I told Williamson" and somehow a leap ... because I am not a lawyer. So I renegotiated, in a sense, or tightened up criteria with Mr. Ogley and with the Chief Minister about I would look at today's service. There was always a question of what is today? In my mind it was the last 4 or 5 years, really. But I had about 60 plus people who wanted to see me and at the same time as well Senator Syvret, I think it was, when he was the Minister had asked June Thoburn to chair and set up the independent Child Protection Committee and invited the Howard League to come into look at Greenfields and La Moye. So, again, I was conscious that there were about 3 or 4 things going on at the same time and I really did not want to get in their way but I did want to look at today's service.

Senator A. Breckon:

Then from the work that you did, you say with 60 individuals or organisations, you were able to link into the system for that, were you?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I have a lot of notes of individual interviews and also quite a large number of organisations who invited me or who I had asked to see; your youth service, The Bridge and so on. So, yes, it was quite a good response and again, to be very fair to the States, there was no pressure on my producing a report, in fact it went on longer. I think because there was a downturn in people responding to my advertisement but then when the police inquiry became more news, more national news, I inevitably got people who wanted to see me. So, the decision was taken to see them. If anybody wants to see you, please see them. So there was a slight delay in producing the report.

Senator A. Breckon:

I think you pointed out there that you received co-operation wherever you went, really.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes, I was in with the Greffe upstairs here and was also given a lot of privacy, a lot of confidentiality. If people wanted to see me there was no restriction.

Senator A. Breckon:

Yes.

Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier:

Did you get to see individual case files or was that not in your remit?

Mr. A. Williamson:

From memory I saw some individual's files because I spent a day at an office to see how they were receiving clients, how they were receiving phone calls. One of the issues that came up very early was a school was saying to me: "But when we want to get hold of a social worker they are closed at lunchtime." So, yes, I went there today with one of the frontline teams and saw some individual files. If

I was told a very worrying case then if I wanted to see the file I could do.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

When we were interviewing earlier today somebody put it in a very clever way when asked: “Your report does a certain amount, could you criticise it in any way?” The question is, probably, if you were given the time again would you have approached it differently? Where might you have gone to produce a better report? I know that sounds a very strange way of doing it ...

Mr. A. Williamson:

I think it is a very good question because you then have to go back to the time. The frontline staff were, I think, very much under pressure from the various inquiries from the national media and I was very concerned at times about the day-to-day delivery then because we want every child to be looked after properly every day. When you are in an organisation that is under that sort pressure mistakes can be made and also I was worried about recruitment and so on. It would have been nice to have looked at the service in a slightly calmer mode but, on the other hand, it was interesting to see how people coped with quite considerable pressure.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier of St. Saviour:

When you looked at the services and to the extent it is reflected in your report and it is reflected in the way, I suppose, we think, there is a temptation just to replicate best practice in the United Kingdom, or in parts of the United Kingdom. To what extent did your findings differ, not from what was best practice but from where you assessed the situation here you thought: “We cannot just have a simple replication; we have to do it slightly differently”?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Well, I can tell you a very straight answer to that question, it came very early on. In England they were going through the process of separation of children and adult services. Children’s Services was under [\(clarification 14.05.09 - merged with\)](#) Education. Now, when I started as a childcare officer - they were

not merged with education - but there was a Children's Department and an Adult's Department. So I was very conscious of those changes in England and the press reports about it and so on. I looked at that here probably for 15 minutes, maybe it was half an hour, I am just generalising, because in truth (1) you had already invested in a new IT system and (2) I think there is merit in being joined up, significant merit. I can remember there was an issue when I was a childcare officer called "transition". It is the 17 and a half year-old lad who has got a profound disability, for example, and he becomes an adult. Does the adult service know? Is the adult service ready for that young person coming through? Has funding been set aside? So I thought you could keep the advantage by having a joint health service. I was conscious of the English system that was coming in but felt that here you have got the opportunity to provide a very good joint service. So in my view, let us keep the structure simple; one boss, one system.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Talking of joined up, although I know it was not entirely under your remit, we have obviously looked at things like the Scottish system and particularly the interface, such as it is, with the criminal justice system. Do you feel you are able to do as much work as you wanted in that area and that the recommendations you made or the kind of issues that the Howard League has raised, will that lead us to a better integration of services and get rid of the strange anomaly between Greenfields and the prison, for example?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I think, yes, you can and I think you are to be congratulated for spending a significant amount of money on Greenfields. I think the design is very good. You have allowed at least 2 senior members of staff to go and look at a number of units across England and Scotland, you went to Glasgow. I would think you could tweak the designs as the years go by inevitably, but overall I think that is very good. There is an issue about age and the residents at La Moye. We tried to deal with the issues of transporting to and from in court for bail hearings and so on, we tried to deal with that one. Because the Howard League were going to La Moye I kept away from that one issue, really, but I did feel that I could say something about Greenfields. I spent quite a bit of time at Greenfields. I stayed there ([clarification 14.05.09 Mr.](#)

Williamson stayed on the island overnight and visited Greenfield's the next morning) overnight one Friday to see how the night staff handed over to the morning and things like that because that is where communication can get fractured.

Senator A. Breckon:

Something you touched on earlier; I wonder if you would like to comment on the use of the Howard League about the criminality age in 10 to 14 and the United Nations convention. Also we have visited Greenfields and La Moye, young offenders in the female wing, and also Le Preference and Brig y Don. There seems to be some tension between the 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, who is doing what. In your professional opinion is there a need for some flexibility in there, depending on the maturity of the young people and what might be right for them? Let me qualify that a little bit, we had a young fellow in La Moye who when sentenced was in La Moye, but when on remand was in Greenfields and he said there was a contrast between the 2. Then the other views have been expressed about mixing different age groups in the same cohort, as it were.

Mr. A. Williamson:

It is a debateable area for you but at least you are keeping the young people of Jersey in Jersey. You know, you are not just buying a placement in England, which makes rebuilding family life more difficult. I think it is a really positive statement you made by investing in Greenfields. I would urge for some flexibility. I did meet with the Howard League because when I was at Greenfields 2 or 3 times, the occupancy was very low. I understand at the moment it is very high.

Senator A. Breckon:

It is full, yes.

Mr. A. Williamson:

I think if you keep some flexibility in the system and one of the things I remember talking about was whether you could, with some very minor alterations, maybe offer some temporary care to an acutely

depressed 17-year-old. It does not always have to be secure and linked to the prison. On the other hand, I understand that some provision is being made at Les Chênes, I think, for some for leaving care and support. I mean, I think, given your population size, and another reason why - and I do not want to run on too much - I thought you were wise to keep the service together as children and adults in one, as we have an ageing population across and I think increasingly it is going to be about supporting old people as well. So I just feel with your population I would keep the flexibility if you can. There are some issues with La Moye but I think, post-Howard League, that can be tackled.

Senator A. Breckon:

Something you mentioned a little bit earlier I would just like to ask you a question about, and that is you mentioned working with people across the system and co-operation, what would your view be about the Children's Executive and the workings of that? As you probably know, it flowed from the *Kathy Bull Report* and recommendations which was probably more to do with emotional and behavioural difficulties in challenging youngsters rather than the whole "looked after children" thing. Would you like to comment on that?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I think the idea behind Kathy Bull's recommendations is a very good one. I think in practice it was probably difficult to get the group together. I mean, I think for staff at the frontline it is good for them to know who is in charge. If something that is difficult, going wrong that night, or whatever, Saturday night, who is running the show? So clear line management accountability for me is important. Now, that does not mean I do not rate partnership working, of course I do, and you have a couple of interesting developments at schools with social workers based in schools. But I think it does need somebody to drive the Children and Young Persons agenda at Ministerial level. Probably one person has to be responsible but clearly you have got to work closely together with the Education Service and with Health.

Senator A. Breckon:

In your view would that be at a higher level than we have perhaps done to date then, at officer level and politically?

Mr. A. Williamson:

No. I understand the reasons why the decisions have been made. I feel the team is working together; I have been with them just now. You feel there is more communication or a more joined up approach, I think.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I want to come back to the report itself and the implementation of that report. I want to come back and ask you the question again in a slightly different way, it the same question, it is this: you did it under pressure at a time when the service was very pressured with a remit that was limited - what is missing? What is missing that somebody might say: "Yes, well you have not addressed that"?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I think if you had an unlimited budget and unlimited time ...

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Yes, go for it.

Mr. A. Williamson:

I am always interested in how some of these issues are handled in, say, Holland or Scandinavia. You know, we hear that they are leading the way in reducing youth crime, and so on. I would really love to have a look at that. Maybe that is what you can do from here. I was very pleased, for example, that you have asked the Scottish service to come in as the inspection agency, I think that is a very clever move. There is always a temptation to say: "Let us talk to the Isle of Man" or: "Let us talk to ..." and that is not a criticism of the Isle of Man, but I think sometimes let us talk to Camden or Kensington or Kent, or wherever. There are some very high quality services in England, let us have a look at that. I think the

idea of the Scottish inspection agency is a very good one. Again, that will bring in some different views. So, I suppose, inevitably if there had not been pressure on producing the report I would probably have taken a bit more time to look at some of the really latest developments.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

More radical in comparison?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Also have a greater knowledge of the Island because I was very conscious always that I do not know here and communities are unique and have their unique features; it would have been nice to have spent more time looking at that. For example, links with G.P. (general practitioner) surgeries would be a good one. Community links, what are the strengths with G.P.s, sometimes you could put social workers based there. But those are the things you can look at in the future.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I suspect I know what the answer is to the question I am going to ask is, but one of the reasons why we are here is because we net the implementation plan with a price tag attached to it and the Treasury Resources Minister, has slashed it as they do, to what extent is it all or nothing with your review? If we are going to do it should it be all or nothing, can we change it at all and, particularly, what is the importance, do you think, of the Laming compliance in your package which was bolted on at the end?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I think the implementation plan that I have seen from Marnie Baudains, when I was over there last time they went through it with me, I hope that not everything is that bad. I try to be very realistic about money in the sense of saying you might be able to close a children's home and sell it because your fostering programme is doing very well and has taken off. So it was not just saying, more, more, more, it was saying that there are some benefits here because you might have one or 2 buildings that you do not need, certainly I thought one. I understand now that it is under pressure, there is an issue. Do you

keep some of them open just in case? The dilemma, in my experience, is that when you have buildings you can fill them and sometimes it does not meet the child's needs. I think the fostering emphasis was good, very good, and needs to be supported. I thought the links at schools, placement in schools social work was very good, developing well. We need to take a step back now and look at the development programme for that. But I really do try and keep my feet on the ground with the recommendations.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

So you would say that the implementation plan that arose out of your report was realistic?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I think so. I am pretty confident about that.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

The importance of Laming compliance, central or peripheral? Because that is one of the things that was obviously targeted straightaway: "That is big numbers."

Mr. A. Williamson:

Sure. That really is a decision for the States. I am not ducking the answer but it is easy to say it is not *Laming* compliance if something goes wrong. On the other hand, the latest *Laming Report* is recommending a separation of children now which we are not doing here. So you can take a step back, I would say.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

It has been put to us that if you have specialists in Child Protection it is a very draining and very demanding job.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes, it is.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Then the importance of *Laming* compliance that a workload is feasible is fairly critical. If you go for a more generic approach then perhaps not because the nice bits of the work will compensate this intense bit.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes, I do not think you can do 37 hours, or whatever, on real frontline child protection. I have met very few people who can cope with that. I think here you may have some opportunities, which I think you have started to develop different ways of working, and so on. I mean, I was more worried about the vacancy level, in truth, and recruitment.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Yes, that is an issue, is it not, we have one-third fewer than we should have at the moment, and a pretty ambitious recruitment programme outlined in the implementation plan. How realistic is that?

Mr. A. Williamson:

You might be in a better position than some parts of the country. Since the report, of course, we have had the Haringey case and we have had pretty poor publicity for social care generally and social work training, I think, has been affected as well. You are not in the media as much as you were, I am very pleased to say because I always worry about the pressure on the staff. Maybe the Scottish Executive, when they get to know here on the Island and the (special type ([Special circumstances](#))), may be able to say: “Well, have you thought about developing that bit?” and so on. I just felt at that moment that it was also about making sure that you as a government were not vulnerable. So that is why the term “*Laming* compliance” came in and so on. It is about you being able to say we are confident.

Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier:

No, I am interested in really asking the question I was going to, recruitment is one thing but what is the

biggest danger for us keeping the staff from just developing the service? What is the biggest obstacle for us as a small jurisdiction?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I think it would be great to work here because you can be imaginative in some of the ways you are working and you can take maybe some slightly different routes in terms of childcare, looking after young people. Our business is about risk taking. Your frontline staff make the decision that that child is going to be okay with his mum, (minor deletion and clarification 14.05.09 or that the child may not be considered to be in a safe home) That one not ... and so on. This one is now ready to start living independently at 17, this one is not. That is a judgment, is it not, that is a calculated judgment? I think when you are taking those judgments you need to know you are going to be supported. It does not mean you are going to be supported if you have made a silly decision but you have got somebody to account to for that decision: "Why did you take that decision? Show me your notes; let me see your thinking what was going on about that decision that you took. It is always easy in hindsight to say that was the wrong decision but at the time what was going through your head when you made that decision about that child? Let me see the notes, let me see what you have done." I think you have got an opportunity here to do that; to allow professional social work to flourish. I hope you do not think I am being naïve in saying that but I just feel that ... I saw some very interesting good stuff going on at Greenfields working with young people because there are some difficulties which people need to be aware of when they are being highly critical. It has never occurred to me before about somebody coming into a secure unit and one of the things you have to do is find out is do they know any of the other people in the unit and do they know any staff. There are some special features about life here and I think turn those into strengths if we can. That is why I just felt there were people who were prepared to sit with a young person until late in the evening, seeing them through their crisis and so on and, overall, people wanting to deliver a good service.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

In terms of just revisiting your original report and your thinking, Andrew, we have had the *Looked After*

Report from the House of Commons Select Committee, do you feel you were sufficiently radical in your views on the residential care side on the Island?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Probably at the time. I remember tempering my wishes a little bit in terms of the number of residential beds. Now it might say “good job” because they are all full. I just felt that really one of the major targets here is to re-establish a professional motivated workforce who feel supported and valued and not to keep reorganising. [\(Sentence removed for clarity and factual accuracy 14.05.09\)](#)

Deputy G.P. Southern:

One of the consequences of that is a move to continue with the fostering service which we feel is going to take up most of those places. One of the direct consequences of that is, for example, a move to smaller units as well, is a move to have a service level agreement with Brig y Don which said: “We will tell you who you are taking.” What we have got now is Brig y Don has closed down. It said: “We are closing come August.”

Mr. A. Williamson:

I did not know that.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Now, they would say they were somewhat specialist but they did take smaller kids and they did involve themselves in assessing placements into fostering care or adoption care, and they did provide a service that was fairly unique on the Island with an expertise that did not stretch to catering for stroppy 15year-olds, for want of a better word, with behavioural problems ...

Senator A. Breckon:

Challenging.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Challenging, yes. Now you are saying in terms of staff morale, there is a set of people at Brig y Don whose morale has just gone through the floor, I think.

Mr. A. Williamson:

I did not know that they were closing. That is a shame because I remember - I think I put it in my report, or was it in the supporting papers - being very impressed with the staff there who kept in touch with a young lady that I met who had lived there and was now being supported in her work - she has started to work - and living down the road, which is just what we should be doing. That was very impressive. There is a problem though if your age group is such that that is the easier, if I can say that, end of fostering. That is an issue. I did not know that they did not feel they could develop and move to where the more difficult placements are for us because one of the things you want to do is keep the young people on the Island.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

It would be interesting to know, and I would like your reaction to it, when you left you were saying: "Brig y Don is there. Refurbishment, yes, it is run down, but it has a function as a place." Here you are, whatever it is, 4 months later and Brig y Don is now out of the picture. Can I take you on to that, there are also questions that have been raised about we have done very well in the last few years with fostering places and we have got fostering organised so that it seems to be quite healthy, one has to say is there a limit to the number of fostering places, we can ...? Will this next recruitment come up with a ... your guess about "plan more" in which case the whole way forward then gets out of kilter. Is that a danger that we ought to be ...?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I think it could be a danger if we just go on assuming that we do not need to change and adapt. I was very impressed with the fostering and adoption team and the way they were working. But they will need to take a step back soon and say: "Right, we are not recruiting for 14 year-olds, hard to place kids (young people), whatever. Okay, we are going to have to target especially. Advertising, payment

maybe, training.” We are going to have to target the more difficult groups. We have done the - I will not say the easy bit - bit that has got us up to this point. But that is true of most of our work, is it not, that you have to take a step back and say: “Okay, what is the next (development) for us?” It is not just more of the same.

Senator A. Breckon:

Can I just share something with you, in evidence we have seen some papers that said in 2000 there were 73 or 74 places in foster families and there was a funding target in 2004 and the current number is 31. There is evidence to say that because of modern day living, perhaps a couple both having to work, not having a spare room in the house and the emergency of some of the situations where from 8.00 p.m. Friday night until 8.00 a.m. Monday morning most people could cope, but come 8.00 a.m. Monday morning people have to go and get on with their life. I just wonder if you would like to comment if that is the general experience elsewhere or if we are fairly unique here because it could be an issue when this round of promoting comes round again.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes. I do not think you are unique in this one. Also I think some people are getting more worried about having a foster child in the house because of allegations, whatever, health and safety issues, all the stuff that surrounds us today. Again, I think you have got an opportunity probably ahead of the game to be redefining that relationship about the benefits of fostering. Of course sometimes you are taking a risk, but it is a measured, calculated risk, properly recorded, with proper training and so on. We have got not to just sit down and let them go, we have got to really try and encourage people. I know lots of people back at home who thought they would be fostering by now because their children have gone, or whatever, and they have got a spare room, and I think they are slightly hesitant because of what they consider might be too risky.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Back to more mundane or prosaic things, Andrew, one of the things that confused people post-Bull was

the management structure, not only at the political level but at the sub-political level. You have obviously made recommendations to rationalise it, like when we look at your recommendation number 8 which is to have a major new directorate. But the interesting thing about this is it has asked for 15 F.T.E.s (full-time equivalent) in this new directorate. Are we still perpetuating what some people saw as a very large, overweighty and potentially confusing management structure?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I think you need clarity in the responsibilities. That comes as an obvious one but I think you need clarity about who is responsible for the quality of this service. During my discussions with members of staff there was confusion. I am not saying there is because I do not know, it is probably a year ago or more when I was interviewing. There was confusion about working together, who can authorise the placement, the payment for it? Who can do it? Some head teachers saying: "We cannot get hold of Social Services." It seemed to me that there was this confusion. I was not saying how many extra posts you need but I do think that we should take a step back and look at the Children's Executive experience because one of the reasons, as I understand it, was that it was quite hard to get diaries to agree to get people together. I am just saying let us learn from those experiences. I do not know how many people are needed. I have tried to avoid that because I do not know enough about life here, about working on this Island, distance, size and so on, where the big demands are. I imagine they are here but I do not know. I just thought those are decision for the people who live here and who know it, but I do think it needs clarity and some joining up. You have got a good youth service but there are aspects of the youth service that were not relating to youth offending, or whatever. It may not cost money, it might save some.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

At the risk of asking you a leading question, when you look, for example, at the management structure for the residential care service all the way down from the Minister through Marnie Baudains to Phil Dennett and then to the manager of Secure Services, to the manager in Greenfields, do you not think that we are going for this unbelievably complex system where everybody is being told social work is on the

frontline and what we need with support and supervision. But that is where the action is and for a small society we seem to have an awfully complicated management structure. So, comments, please.

Mr. A. Williamson:

How is a nod, for the record? **[Laughter]** I did not see it all as a new process. I think you have got some opportunities to redesign some process. For example, you have got professional officer now for the Child Protection in Jersey, which is great. Does that have an impact on others in other parts of the business? You have got to avoid this thing of just adding more and more and more to it; redefine, take a step back. Yes, I think the heads of the homes and Greenfields you can have a look at. How many do you need to cover 24/7? The manager is not going to be there 24/7 but as long as the people there know who is in charge that night if there is a crisis; who you can get with a phone call. I am very clear, in my judgment, that it would be Marnie or Tony who would get that phone call late at night if there is a crisis. I would certainly want to know if it was my department. That goes with the territory, it goes with the job. You are the boss, you get a phone call in the middle of the night if something is going wrong and I would expect that to happen.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I think one of the obvious issues you had to wrestle with was allegations about lack of accountability, about the absence of proper checks and balances of the system. Yet on the other hand, if you look at the *Looked After Report* they want staff where there is a more trusting atmosphere, where you get more freedom of staff and you have not got this incredible monitorial and inspectorial system that is looking at their every action, you know, in case they touch a child wrongly, and so forth and so on; terrible pressures they work under. How on earth do you get this balance? The system is being well regulated, there are checks and balances that work yet staff do not feel imposed upon and oppressed in this environment.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes, I think that is a really good question. I have not read the report but I have seen quite a lot of the

press coverage. There is an issue about over-regulation, over-inspection and so on, in England and I think maybe some professional groups do feel that it has taken away some of their freedom to operate; that is a different matter. I think here, though, because you are bringing in external reviewing, you have got your J.C.P.C. (Jersey Child Protection Committee), you have got your external inspection coming in from Scotland; that should mean that managers can confidently trust their frontline staff. The issue is, will I hear if that member of staff is not doing his job properly and is just writing false records? Will I get to hear from the boss? I think if you bring in some external people, some external checking systems, which you are doing, you will hear and that should give you the confidence that frontline staff can be a bit more adventurous and feel a bit more secure and that might help them. This could be a very good place to work.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Just to take on from Roy's point, do you not agree that an overregulated, possibly, service itself arises out of a culture of fear? Do you think that is a fair interpretation?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes, I probably do. I think the danger is that you feel that you can totally eliminate risk ... you know, somewhere around the corner is the perfect system. There is some very good stuff going on, judgments are being made on a daily basis by some staff. I have met some very good frontline staff here. I have met some others who need a clearer line of accountability, in my view, and need to be held to account. But, to be fair to people, they did not come to see me with their lawyer, with their trade union representative, whatever, so I have a degree of confidentiality I have got to respect, obviously. But, overall, if I thought there was some poor practice going on I can assure you I (would have) passed that on to that to the line manager.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

So what you are saying then is part of the way of getting rid of that culture of fear is having that accountability established so people know where the buck stops and who they answer to.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes. You will need assurance in the States that the service is open, accountable, high quality and children are safe. We have had some degree of validation through the year that that is happening. I think there has already been quite a significant change, really, it seems to me, on that point.

Senator A. Breckon:

Can I come to another issue, Andrew, and that is the legal side, if you like, and some issues that are exercising the minds of the legal profession and the courts. Your recommendations touch on that with this involvement at the moment with social workers and probation and things like that in a reporting structure, but they are also there in some aspect of a sort of care aspect as well. Would you like to comment on that and how important you see the promotion and the division of that for the benefit of the children.

Mr. A. Williamson:

This is a very pertinent issue, it is a today issue, because I know that the courts in England are getting very overloaded with actions taken by social care staff at the frontline, particularly since Haringey. The question that was put to me was do you need to set up what in England is called a C.A.F.C.A.S.S. (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service) service. (Requested deletion agreed) I think with a population of 90,000 you cannot have absolutely everything. You have got to have some people who can multi-task, it seems to me. I am not suggesting they should not be professionally well developed, well trained, well supported, well paid and all the rest of it, but I just felt that you ... at the end of the day, I do not know, I did not go to the courts, I do not know how the system works here. What I do know is that people I spoke to said it is an area that they feel needs more discussion. It may be that there could be a twice yearly meeting between some of the key players, between social care and the courts, chaired by an independent whoever. But there does need to be more discussion about how we are going to handle some of these difficult areas where you can get blockages and people feeling that they are not having a good service and being disgruntled and some probably feeling unhappy.

Senator A. Breckon:

Did you pick up anything from civil proceedings in the Family Division about divorce and things like that, about children that might be vulnerable because of those situations and the involvement, not just of the legal profession but perhaps one of the agencies assisting people in family mediation, anything like that?

Mr. A. Williamson:

A few of the people who came to see where concerned about either what they felt was a bias at work. Now, that is often the case. You have to come down on one side, the husband or the wife, in terms of future care of the children. That is going to be seen by the other party as bias, and so on. But, yes, I think there were some concerns about this area and the transparency, the fairness of it. Is it seen to be fair? Does it feel fair? There are some saying it is who you know.

Senator A. Breckon:

In your experience and in what you have seen, because we have, let us say, pressure on the system are we targeting support at the sort of higher critical level rather than perhaps having quality interventions at a lower level? Is that generally what you saw or are we doing things at a lower level as well?

Mr. A. Williamson:

You are doing some good stuff at the lower level ... not lower but the first tier, you know. There is some good work going on at Pathways, I remember, N.S.P.C.C. (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children), The Bridge. You have got a number of places where there is some good work going on with the families to try and develop parenting skills to keep families together. Maybe we need to sharpen up the strategy; what is the plan? Is the plan to have more of the Pathways? If it is working do we want 3 more in other parts of the Island? I do not know. I was really saying I think you at least need to think about these things and develop a strategy.

Senator A. Breckon:

What about at a critical level? Geoffrey mentioned looking at individual cases but, I mean, obviously there are cases that are exercising the minds of the court at the moment and have taken a lot of time. Is that taking up a lot of resource and should we be moving back a bit and, as I said before, trying to get quality interventions with children?

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes, because I think the courts are under pressure. You could be the first area to calm down, given the incredible spotlight that was here a year ago. Post-Haringey in England, that pressure has built up, built up, built up over there now. Hopefully here it can all just calm down and be a bit more confident that there is some good work going on, the frontline staff a bit more joined up, schools talking to social work and medics and, you know, a bit more co-ordination - some might say a lot more. But, anyway, good evidence that the agencies are working together, a clear view of that development of family work, a clear view about the fostering development and, therefore, what children's support means. I was hearing yesterday about the development of services for leaving care, which is great, really good.

Senator A. Breckon:

What about your view on the fact that in the Children's Law in Jersey there was no equivalent in the U.K. (United Kingdom) Children's Act which allowed for guardianship and representation, it was sort of missed out. Some would say on a cost basis and what might happen but perhaps that particular chicken is coming home to roost now. Do have a view on how important that is?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I have probably got a view but I do not feel qualified to comment on that here because I did not do enough work there.

Senator A. Breckon:

On the welfare child issue ...

Mr. A. Williamson:

But it is crucial that the child's voice is heard and that some independent advocacy is there and is available.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

One of the bits that was snipped out of the implementation plan was what appears to be a minor issue but it is not; it is the way in which a child can get its voice heard and know it is going to be represented in an advocacy scheme. I thought completely essential for moving forward is make sure you are having the children who are on the receiving end, participating and owning sort of what is happening and making sure that they are listened to - absolutely key to it, I would have thought.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes. I do not know why that was done. It may be that there is an alternative model being developed. I genuinely do not know.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

When the microphone goes off I will tell you.

Senator A. Breckon:

Andrew, can I ask you something that might assist us, and this is a million dollar question, did you find a central source of information that says who was in touch or providing services for children, including government agencies, what they did, how they were funded? What was there? Is there a central source that would tell us that anywhere that you are aware of? I am just thinking that we are meeting the N.S.P.C.C. next week; we do not know how they are funded, by whom, how much, who works for them, whether they adopt national strategy, whether they have got a local plan. We just do not know. So were you able to access any of this easily? Perhaps you could cut our task down by half if you could tell us that.

Mr. A. Williamson:

There is this thing in there about the reality and what people believe and what I was told right at the beginning was that there is not any outside influence, it is all very closed. I remember getting the flight back the second or third time, it does not matter, and Phil Durbin was there at the airport. I know him, he lives in Taunton, Somerset, (N.S.P.C.C.) and this is part of his ... “What are you doing here? I said: “I did not know you were over here.” That was a very useful source of information for me. From his perspective, what are the issues? It does just need to be more joined up.

Senator A. Breckon:

The thing is, you see, as we have gone on all sorts of people and organisations have come and seen us and somebody has mentioned something. For example, there is Support Through a Divorce. There is a little small charity that does things; helps divorcing couples with children at the centre of what they are doing. Then there are mediation services and there are other things but we have not been able to go anywhere and somebody said: “Well, these are the organisations; this is their annual report, this is how they are funded, this is their plan.”

Mr. A. Williamson:

We should be able to do that.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

They should be able to supply a map somewhere.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Absolutely.

Senator A. Breckon:

The other thing is with the Children’s Executive, they did not meet very often at either officer or

political level; nobody seemed to pick up the cudgel on behalf of that and sort of move it on. So it was a case really of are we trying to move from a not very good position to a bad one. You know, do we need to sort of review what was there and I know that some of the recommendations are to do that. But, in general terms, did you find that at officer level people are aware of each other and they are co-operating, police with schools, for example? Did you see any of it to say that if a child comes into school at 9.00 a.m. - this is a question that was asked of us - where there is a problem with dress, bruising, whatever, how does that get progressed so that it is acted upon? Did you apply that sort of test?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I think that is a very good question. Yes, I did and I got some very mixed responses from different schools, different members of the medical profession, different G.P.s. Now that is probably true everywhere but I am just wondering and I hope that maybe part of the answer to your main question will be that you have now established a separate J.C.P.C. You have done it with an independent chair and with a professional officer.

Senator A. Breckon:

Yes.

Mr. A. Williamson:

I think that is a really good move. That annual report could be one of those reports to you that will tell you where the weaknesses are, what we have discovered this year, what we are doing about it ...

Senator A. Breckon:

So, just moving on from there, could an extension of that remit would then be the sort of informal authority on what people are doing, part of the internal check and balance, if you like, albeit semi-independent.

Mr. A. Williamson:

Yes. In writing a report to you, the annual report from the J.C.P.C. chair, you have got to be confident

that what you are saying is factually spot on and that you are not prescribing over a system that has got obvious weaknesses, otherwise they will be letting you down.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

One of the issues, Andrew, irrespective of the excellence of the report and the implementation plan, is this whole issue of keeping momentum going. Sometimes in Jersey, perhaps unfairly, we are accused of not being terribly change oriented and things stagnate and so forth and so on. Without trespassing into the political sphere, how would you recommend we keep the momentum going so that we really keep children's services moving?

Mr. A. Williamson:

That is (a good) question. I hope the answer will be what you have already started at the J.C.P.C., the external review. But I suspect with all your links you do not need external people to tell you whether it is working or not. You will know through schools, you will know through your own communities what people feel. When I was at Pathways there was a very strong support from mums with young children coming near that level. So you will know about the use of statutory visitors to Greenfields, you will know about the use of Greenfields and the links with the court with La Moye and the links with the courts, whether that is working. But, yes, one of the ironies of my working life probably is that by and large we react to a crisis. Maria Colwell was one of the first ones in my working life. I went to Brighton shortly after the *Colwell Report*, to East Sussex. Victoria Climbié is the obvious one in recent times and now Haringey. What we have got to do is not just wait for those very sad cases, we have got to just keep developing the service. One of my strong points to Mike Pollard and to Marnie is we really now have to think about supporting staff and developing their professional approach. (The Service) has gone through a very difficult time but we can see some light and let us really now think about building up professional standards.

Senator A. Breckon:

Andrew, is there anything that we may have missed that you would like to say to us?

Mr. A. Williamson:

I am delighted that you are interested in the report but more than that, you are interested in the Children's Service in Jersey. My profession, my business, is we have got to not just to respond to the nasty tragedies, the horrible tragedies, we have got to keep on really developing high professional standards, invest in training, invest in line supervision here, create development much earlier on about holding on to (create strategies for developing) good staff. So, with your interest, thank you very much for the opportunity today.

Senator A. Breckon:

Thank you very much, indeed, for coming. Your name has been mentioned lots of times in different areas and we were asked if we were reviewing the *Williamson Report* and recommendations and we said it is a little more than that because what we have done is we have not ignored you, it is at the centre of what we are doing and we do have to report back in about a month's time, which sounds a long time but it is not, and we are still talking to people. Following on from today there might be something that arises where somebody gets in touch to follow up ...

Mr. A. Williamson:

You have my contact details.

Mrs. C. Le Quesne:

I am sure Sam has, yes.

Mr. A. Williamson:

He has.

Senator A. Breckon:

Anyway, again, just to thank you for time today, it is appreciated.

Mr. A. Williamson:

I look forward to reading what you write.

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

So do we. [Laughter]

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Thank you very much.