

24th August 2006

Agenda Item: A2

Early Years Strategy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council of Ministers, at its meeting of 27th July, received a presentation from the Minister for ESC and a paper prepared by the Department for Education, Sport and Culture which explored some of the complexities involved in developing a coherent early years strategy. The purpose was to stimulate Ministerial debate about the fundamental principles which might underpin future arrangements.
- 1.2 Both the presentation and paper focused on provision for children aged 3 -5, this reflecting the scope of R.C.54 'Investing In Our Future: A Vision of Early Childhood Education and Care for Children in Jersey'. However, it was recognised that such provision was only a sub-set of arrangements for children aged 0-5 and support for their parents/carers, which itself constitutes one element of Social Policy for the Island.
- 1.3 The outcome of the discussions held by the Council of Ministers was agreement that 'Education, Sport and Culture, Employment and Social Security, Health and Social Services and Treasury and Resources Departments should work together, under the auspices of the Social Strategy Group to develop an Early Years Strategy for the 0-5 year age range by the end of 2006'

2. Background

- 2.1 In recent years, there has been a number of studies and reports into Child Care Provision, including:
 - "Report of the Working Party on Child Care", chaired by the Presidents of Employment and Social Security and Education (1996)
 - "Child Care Provision : Working Party Strategy" , Lodged au Greffe Decembre 1996 (P.224)
 - "A Vision for the Future of Early Education and Childcare" which followed a review undertaken by Jenny Spratt, Head of Early Years and Childcare Services for Peterborough City Council (2004)
 - "Investing in Our Future : A Vision for Early Childhood Education and Care for Children in Jersey" present to the States by the ESC Committee in July 2006 (R.C.54)
 - "Early Childhood Education and Care" – Report to the Council of Ministers prepared by DfESC, July 2006
- 2.2 These reports have resulted in a number of developments, including:

- the formation of the Jersey Child Care Trust;
- the enhancement of tax allowances for child care costs;
- the introduction of a child care allowance for low income groups;
- support for the policy to provide a nursery class at every non-fee paying primary school.

2.3 However, as recognised in R.C.54, these developments have not constituted a coherent family policy, based on clear values, which recognises that the States need to actively support parents in the choices they make in the best interests of child development.

3. Terms of Reference

3.1 The purpose of the officer group, referred to at para 1.3, has been set by the Council Ministers as follows:

“to develop an Early Years Strategy for the 0-5 age range by end of 2006”

3.2 The officer group will:

- bring forward recommendations for a comprehensive strategy for supporting children aged 0-5, and their parents/carers;
- consider the appropriate arrangements for financial support including tax benefits and allowances;
- consider the types of arrangements (e.g. paid maternity/paternity leave) to support effective family policy;
- take account of the potential impact of any proposals for change on existing provision;
- ensure that any recommendations or options for development are fully costed.

3.3 In undertaking their work, the officer group will take account of:

- existing provision for the support of children aged 0-5 and their parents/carers;
- reviews and reports, including those detailed at para 2.1 which are relevant in the development of an Early Years Strategy for Jersey;
- relevant research into effective provision, drawn from the UK and other jurisdictions;
- responses received from the public consultation on R.C.54 “Investing in Our Future : A Vision for Early Childhood Education and Care for Children in Jersey”
- the key principles set out in “Every Person Counts – A Social Policy framework for Jersey”.

3.4 The membership of the officer group will comprise senior staff with appropriate knowledge, experience and influence drawn from the following departments, nominated by the relevant chief officers:

- Education, Sport and Culture
- Health and Social Services
- Employment and Social Security
- Treasury and Resources

under the chairmanship of:

- Dr Ian Skinner, Home Affairs Department

An invitation will be extended to Fiona Vacher, Executive Director of the Jersey Child Care Trust to join the officer group.

It is anticipated that, in the first instance, the time commitment for each officer will be approximately 10 working days.

3.5 The officer group will report to the Social Policy Strategy Group, chaired by the Chief Executive of the States, with the intention of presenting its report and recommendations to the Council of Ministers no later than December 2006.

4. Recommendation

The Council of Ministers is asked to endorse the Terms of Reference and membership of the officer group.

**Tom McKeon,
Director of Education, Sport and Culture
14th August 2006**