

I have a number of issues to raise in relation to the proposal to means-test access to some nursery places in Jersey. I have briefly summarised my concerns / questions below:

1. The announcement does not appear to have been preceded by any consultation or mentioned in any manifesto document. The announcement did not clearly explain the nature of the changes or provide any policy rationale, which would be essential to ensure an informed debate on this change.

2. It is not clear why means-testing should be applied to nursery education but not other public goods, such as schooling and access to medical care. Is there a consistent approach to means-testing in the States of Jersey?

3. The £75k cap is arbitrary and too low.

3a) In Jersey it would appear that the average family has a combined income of circa £70k - therefore this will have an impact on middle income earners and I would question the announcements that this would only affect 150 or so families per year.

3b) To reflect on my personal circumstances, as someone who may be affected by these changes I would make the following observations: Being on the margin of the £75k amount, I would look to reduce my hours and my wife would no longer work - a loss to the Jersey economy. For someone close to the £75k border the impact on net disposable income would be significant, taking into account high housing and nursery costs, in some cases I would estimate a 20% reduction in disposable income.

4. Were alternatives policies considered, such as a reduction in funding hours across the board, offering funding for one child in multiple child families? What would be the impact of these options?

5. What is the rationale for continuing to provide funding for children in state school nurseries, but not private nurseries. This creates an arbitrary split in funding for those lucky enough to get a place in one of these nurseries. In order for this policy to be applied fairly a school nursery place would need to be available for all children. The policy appears to be inconsistent with the concept of parental choice, where parents can choose what they consider to be the best nursery education for their children.

6. Philosophically, I am comfortable with a progressive tax system that provides for public benefits to all, regardless of their circumstances. However, the prospect of both paying tax to send certain children into education and simultaneously being required to personally fund my own children's attendance seem inherently unfair.