

STATES OF JERSEY

Health, Social Security and Housing Scrutiny Panel Respite Care Review

Session 1

MONDAY, 27th FEBRUARY 2012

Panel:

Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Peter (Chairman)
Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier (Vice-Chairman)
Deputy J.G. Reed of St. Ouen

Witness:

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School

Present:

Ms. K. Boydens (Scrutiny Officer)
Ms. F. Carnegie (Scrutiny Officer)
Mr. S. Jones (Adviser)

[13:29]

Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Peter (Chairman):

Thank you very much for coming along today, Sharon. I would just like to go through some formal management. I have to draw everybody's attention to a few points. This is the meeting of the Health, Social Security and Housing Scrutiny Panel and we have a code of behaviour for members of the public that is displayed on the wall and, in particular, to the following points, that all electronic devices including mobile phones should be switched to silent. The taking of digital images or audio recordings by the public will not be permitted. If you wish to eat or drink please leave the room. Finally, I would like to ask that members of the public do not interfere in the proceedings and as soon as the hearing is closed that those are to leave quietly. Members and witnesses may wish to make themselves available afterwards but any communication should take place outside the building. So, just for the record, if you would like to introduce yourself, please.

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Okay, I am Sharon Eddie and I am the head teacher at Mont à l'Abbé School.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

We will also introduce ourselves. I am Kristina Moore. I am the Chairman of the Health, Social Security and Housing Panel.

Deputy J.A. Hilton of St. Helier (Vice-Chairman):

I am Deputy Jackie Hilton. I am Vice-Chairman of the Panel.

Mr. S. Jones (Adviser):

I am Sion Jones. I am here to advise the panel on the review.

Deputy J.G. Reed of St. Ouen:

Deputy James Reed, panel member.

Ms. F. Carnegie (Scrutiny Officer):

Fiona Carnegie, Scrutiny Officer.

Ms. K. Boydens (Scrutiny Officer):

Kellie Boydens, Scrutiny Officer.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

So, you are the first person we have heard evidence from as we begin our review or the formal part of our review into respite care. I think it is a really excellent opportunity to set the scene and to learn about the people that are in need of this service, really, because I or we anticipate that you see most of them or a good deal of them through your role as head teacher at Mont à l'Abbé. Could you just tell me a little about the school, the number of children who attend the school and the differing needs that you serve?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Okay. Well, basically the school provides for children aged 3 to 19. We are a split site, so in effect we have a primary school and a secondary school. You probably know where the primary school is; it is at the top of Queen's Road. The secondary school about 5 years ago was co-located on to the Haute Vallée campus so we have opportunities for inclusion. The children's needs range from very profound and multiple learning and physical difficulties, sensory loss, right through to children with very challenging behaviour as a result of autism, children with some moderate learning difficulties, and quite a number of those children are part-time included in mainstream schools. So, it is a very wide remit, probably a wider remit than you would find in a special school in the U.K. (United Kingdom).

The Deputy of St. Peter:

How many pupils are there?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

We have approximately 90. That number fluctuates.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Is that through the whole age group?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

That is through the whole, that is from 3 up to 19.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Nine-oh, 90?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Primary to 19 years-old?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

You must need a great deal of staff to cope with that. How do you balance the different requirements of the pupils that you have?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Well, all of the children progress through the school as their chronological age, so that means with any class we have that full range that I have spoken about. We have children with very profound needs alongside children who are numerate and literate and part-time in mainstream school. We find there is a lot of benefits for doing that for all of them. That does mean that we do need quite a lot of staff to do that. It is easier, in a way, to designate classes according to disability, but it is not a particularly ethical way to do it, although it would perhaps be cheaper. We are very well resourced as a school. We use a lot of technology. We have a lot of support for children in terms of their communication. We do tend to provide an awful lot of things that perhaps a school like ours would not provide in the U.K. because I think perhaps we are the only one. So, for instance, we have a transport service that brings children into school and takes them home again, which is not normal. We have a school meal service which provides meals in school for the children, but both of those things, although it makes the management of the school bigger, actually makes better service, a more bespoke tailored service for the individuals.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Still some filling in on background issues, could you just tell me how many members of staff you have, please, and also a bit about your background if you have taught at other schools?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes, okay. Staff, I will start with the staff. Okay, we have quite a small team of teachers. We have just 12 teachers. We have a lot of support staff and if we add in the support staff and the bus staff and the kitchen staff and the lunchtime supervisors, we probably amass about 70 people, but the actual ...

it is a small S.M.T. (senior management team); there is just 3 of us for the 2 schools and a small team of teachers. Skills in terms of the teachers are very wide which, going on to my background, I was a head teacher at a special school in the U.K. before I came to Jersey. I have been here ... this is my 11th year. I have taught special needs for ... I do not want to say how many years, really, over 25 **[Laughter]**. My Masters degree is in inclusive education, so I am very passionate about inclusion and finding ways that will enable all children to learn. Because we have a very wide remit in terms of our children, when I am looking to recruit staff I am usually looking for something that we have not already got because we tend to train within school a lot. So I have one of my staff who is an autism and behaviour specialist. I have one of my staff who is a literacy specialist and people who are very good with the sensory curriculum or with music. So, between us all we have quite a lot of skills.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Have you seen an increase in any particular need coming to the school?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

I think possibly the need is ... it is a worldwide ... I do not think Jersey is unique, but it is a fact that children are surviving longer now and children who were perhaps at maybe 25, 26 weeks, their prognosis for life is better but that does not necessarily mean that some children have a disability that would not have been there before. Whether it is a case of better diagnosis or whether it is on the increase, we do seem to have more children with autism, but that may be because it is actually identified much quicker than it was. We are getting more children into mainstream. Children that perhaps came to Mont à l'Abbé 20 years ago now are in mainstream schools and being very well provided for there. Part of my school is an outreach service, so we have an outreach service to support those children. Children who have a record of need in mainstream schools or who perhaps have some learning difficulties that may mean that ultimately they would have to come to Mont à l'Abbé School, if we can prevent that we will support the staff in the mainstream school.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

How are those children identified and that information fed back to you?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

The children from mainstream schools?

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Yes.

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

We have a policy and a referral process for that. So if the child has a specific difficulty, the school would discuss it with the parents and probably the psychologist and then there is a panel, a school partnership panel meeting, where all of those children who require support, we look at all of their records and we look at what assessments have been tried to see if there is anything

more that we can do before it would go to a placement panel. A placement panel generally means that someone is looking for a change of placement, so we try and put the support in before the change of placement would be needed.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Sharon, can you just talk us through the child arrives presumably or is about to start school, how are they assessed? At what point is it determined where they should be educated, what sort of services and needs should be provided for them?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

If the child comes to us at the age of 3, it tends to be much more obvious that they need a special school placement. At that point, they have already gone through a whole range of multidisciplinary assessments, so that might have involved the paediatrician and the occupational therapist and the physiotherapist and the speech therapist, and then there is a panel that will actually ... similar to the school partnership meeting, will actually decide where is the best place for that child. Parental views are very important and if the professionals felt that the best place was a special school place but parents were actually saying: "No, I prefer a mainstream placement" that is now more and more likely and we would then try and support in a mainstream school and at least give that a try.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Just for my own benefit, you capture a reasonable number of people at quite a young age, but obviously then you have the issues with regard to diagnosis and perhaps a greater awareness as the child develops?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

How do you deal with that?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

The school can be very much of a 2-way fluid process. So we might get a child come into us at the age of 3 and for a number of reasons, it could have been lack of stimulation or it could be that they spent a lot of time in hospital or that they just were not ready for learning, it could be that maybe by the time they are 5 or 6 they are making really good progress and then we might move them on to a mainstream school placement or a part-time placement. The same can happen the other way, that maybe a child has gone to a mainstream school but has struggled and the school are finding it difficult to meet their needs. So it might be that a child would come to us later. It is not unusual for a child to come to us at year 7. They may cope all the way through primary school where it tends to be, because of the size, smaller and more nurturing and easier for them to cope, but they may be a little bit vulnerable in a large secondary school. So we do get some youngsters that

come to us in the transition from year 6 to year 7, so our class sizes actually tend to get a little bit bigger at that time.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Can I ask you a question around the statement of needs? When your children enter the school at age 3, how soon are they statemented, and for those children who come ... the children you have just been talking about in year 6 or 7 who come to you because things are not working out at the secondary school they are at, how soon would they be statemented or would they come with a statement of need? Can you tell me whether the statement of need does include a requirement for respite?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Okay. Just to clarify the statement of need, which is a U.K. expression, they are a record of need in Jersey and they are not quite as much as a legal document as perhaps the statement would be. I am familiar with the statement from being a head in the U.K. So they would have a record of need and the idea would be with all of our children that they have a record of need before they start school. If they are coming to us at the age of 3 it would be rare if they did not have their record of need or it would be very well along the way. It may be that we have been asked to take the child for social reasons maybe a little bit sooner before it was still being done. So, the school environment would be used as part of the assessment for that. Then the record of need is reviewed every year. We have an annual review meeting involving all those professionals and we look at the record of need and then we update it from there.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Just going back to the statement of need and the difference between the U.K. and here, is it that in the U.K. a statement of need is a statutory ... it is bound by statutory law that the local authority, once a child has been statemented, that care has to be provided?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

What is the difference between here, our record of need ...

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

I do not think it actually has that kind of status here.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

It is not laid down in law?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

No, and the record of need is an educational record of need. Although it does identify other services, I think it is a recommendation. It is difficult to ... because I do not manage those other services, Education do not manage those other services ... although I have to say that there is considerable

support and the agencies work very well together. There very rarely is an issue where there is something on a record of need that another service says: "No, I am not going to provide that."

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Okay, but it is purely for educational need and not for respite need or any other social care?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

No. It might state ... when we have the annual review for the record of need all of those agencies will be involved. So if a child is actually going to a respite provider, the respite provider would come to the meeting and we would all work together to address any needs or in order to provide a consistent environment between school and home and the respite. There is a lot of team working together there. The record of need does not quantify what that should be. We can make a recommendation at the annual review meeting that the child be considered for respite and that would go through the social work team then and after that it is passed on, it is out of our hands then.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Is an annual review meeting the same as a school partnership meeting that you referred to earlier?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

No.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Because you told me the different ...

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

The school partnership meeting is actually between myself, the deputy head who co-ordinates the outreach, and the psychologist that is attached to our school. Any school that is looking for outreach support, professional support, from my school will fill a referral form in with the documentation that we need, pass that on to their psychologist and the psychologist then will pass it on to the psychologist who comes to the meeting. It is always about children that are outside Mont à l'Abbé, not the ones that are inside Mont à l'Abbé. So the annual review meeting is about the children that are at Mont à l'Abbé and who are already receiving support from us, and it is reviewing their record of need.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

So at that annual review meeting you feel that the social worker for each child would attend and all relevant parties?

[13:45]

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

They are always invited to the meeting. I think it would be difficult for them to attend them all if there were ones that we ... we send the invite out at ... we plan all of the dates a year in advance so all of the dates go to them. Not all

of the children have a social worker anyway, but the ones that do have a social worker, I think unless there was a current concern ... I think they would do their best to come but I cannot say they always come to those meetings.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Would it be your experience in the U.K. that all children did have social workers?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

No, no. I think there as well resources are finite. Lots of families would not want a social worker, no more than any of us would probably want one. If you have a social worker it is because you need some support. So, no, I do not think they would all have one.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

In the absence of having a social worker, though, who is it who co-ordinates care aspects like respite?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

In the U.K. or here?

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Here, if there is not a social worker to fulfil that?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

They have to have a social worker in order to have respite. So any child that does have respite does have a social worker. We cannot refer direct to the respite providers. It always goes through the Social Services.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Sharon, we have been made aware that although obviously the child's needs need to be met, taking care of a child with special needs has an impact on all the family. We just wondered could you explain what processes or procedures are in place within your particular area to offer support.

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Outside of school?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Well, no, what dialogue happens, perhaps, with the school and other agencies and the parents themselves?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Okay. We are often the first to realise that a family is under pressure. Obviously, you have 6 or 7 children in a class, it becomes like a family. Sometimes you can identify just a change in the child or the parent will tell you that they are struggling and we will then say: "Well, perhaps at the annual review would you like us to ... if you do not want to ask, we are quite happy to ask for you for this respite." Apart from facilitating it and signposting it, there is not a great deal that we can do in terms of respite. The difficulty for a lot of

them is actually when the respite ... they have had it and then it stops for whatever reason. They get into a routine of coping with that and the child gets into a routine of coping with that, and then that can go because there is a greater need somewhere else. Or it is very difficult to be objective and to look at which families are coping and which are not, because some can appear to cope because that is just the way they are, and actually they might be in the greatest need.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I am just trying to understand. What about general support offered to families? If obviously you are working closely with their children you are going to meet the parents or a parent on a regular basis, one would hope, and if you noticed that the parent is having problems for whatever reason - there could be multiple issues to do not just necessarily with the child but with regard to the family unit - what help can you offer to those parents?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

In terms of respite?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

No, no, just generally, general advice.

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Just generally, I suppose listening, being there, being on the telephone. The more the parents struggle, the more our time is diverted to that because if we can support the family then we get more out of the child. If the child is happy and the child is settled, it makes our job a lot easier. One of the downsides of there not being enough respite is that it can impact on other service providers. I had one parent who I would have a half an hour conversation with every morning because she needed that to talk through, so that is half an hour you are not doing something else. You find the something else time, because if the parent needs that then ... or I do it because if the teacher is doing it, the teacher should be in the class teaching the rest of the 6 or 7 children.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I have one last matter to do with that. It is admirable that you are able to provide and support parents and listen to them, but are there procedures in place that you are able to use to direct those parents, depending on their need, to a relevant person, whether it is a social worker, whether it is a child psychologist, whoever, to support them and actually address some of their more immediate needs that perhaps you could not, as a teacher or head teacher of the school, deal with?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes. I work with quite a small number of social workers, but the ones we work with we have a very good relationship with. I know they are on the end of the telephone. I know if I email they will respond to me fairly swiftly. We work together very well with that. The analogy I use, though, is that it is a bit like spinning plates because there are not enough resources to go and although they want to respond, and they get as frustrated as anyone else, it is a bit like

that trick when they are spinning plates but they get one going and it is going quite happily and they will leave that and they will run around and spin something else and then they will see something is falling over and will have to give that one ... and it is robbing Peter to pay Paul, really, because there is not enough.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Are you aware of any children at Mont à l'Abbé School or Haute Vallée that have had their respite cut in the last year?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Could you give us some idea of the percentage of children who actually can access respite services that you are aware of?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

I do not know if I could be as specific as percentages. I am a little bit cautious because I am very aware I do not want any invasion of their privacy because it is a very small population. Even without mentioning names it can become quite personal. I did make some notes before I came which actually does answer that question and a few others, so maybe if I go through that, then if I have not gotten to your point ...

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Okay.

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

The positives of respite - I started with the positives - is that there is a lot of goodwill between agencies and the professionals are very committed to doing their best for the most needy and vulnerable children. But for me there are 4 issues and one of them is that there is very limited access to respite so it cannot be on a need basis. There is a lack of provision for long-term residential placements for adolescents with mental health issues or for children with physical or learning disabilities, and that has an implication on that first point, which I will explain. There are difficulties with transition planning for our school leavers, especially for those who are unable to access Highlands College, which tends to be our most profoundly disabled children. There is a lack of opportunities for professionals to be proactive and to provide early intervention. They want to do it but that is very, very difficult. In terms of that first one, the limited access to respite, families can come under considerable stress and eventually they just burn out. That means that family life breaks down and there is a greater demand on the limited resources because they actually need more but they often get less because somebody else needed it, and it has a spiralling effect.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Can I just ask there how many ... in rough percentage terms, how many of your families do you feel have experienced a relationship breakdown?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

I would really have to think about that and get back to you. I would not want to give a figure. There is a risk because when the issues are so great the numbers actually can seem even more. I would come back to you with that.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Are you aware of any families who because of respite being withdrawn either completely or at a certain level that the family have actually broken down?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

You are aware of families currently that have been affected in that way?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Okay.

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

The families in crisis then tend to take all of the support, which means that there is none left for those that are not quite yet at crisis, which just means that the people who are not quite at crisis get there quicker, which ...

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

It must make your job even more difficult, actually. It must be really, really difficult.

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

I have actually put it does impact the families, but impact for ... we are a States funded resource as well, so it does have an impact for us and as a school with direct day-to-day involvement, our service tends to then extend beyond what is our remit, which dilutes what we can do. As an example, I have an example here. This is really ... I will not mention it, but it is confidential and I would not like this to be repeated.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

We can stop or at the end, towards the end, go into private.

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

I would not mention any names, it is just the situation, but because of the small population ...

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

It would be identifiable, so it might be better if we went into private, okay.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Yes.

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Okay, right.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

We might just jump across that bit, carry on and then we will go back to it if that is all right.

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes, okay. The second point that I raised about the lack of provision for long-term residential placements has meant that the social workers and the respite providers have had to provide long-term provision for children in a respite home, which meant that all of the respite for all of the children stopped. So any children that went to that respite home did not get any at all. There were a number of other families closely behind the first one that could not cope anymore, so we now have 2 children that are in the U.K. because there is no provision here in Jersey, which, of course, is very expensive and probably means even less likely to get a provision in Jersey because the resources are going elsewhere.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

You feel that that situation came about because those particular families did not receive the level of support that they actually needed for the children to remain in the Island?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

I think there will always be ... in any given population there will always be some children, especially at adolescence, where it is difficult for them to remain in the home. That is not unusual, but that facility does not exist in Jersey. There is nothing for them, so the only option was ... for the first of those students was the respite home, so all of the respite for the others was cut, and then for the next 2 there was not even that option of stopping everybody's respite because that had already stopped. There was not ...

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

So that has happened in the recent past?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Does that situation remain the same at this present moment in time?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Has it improved? They are still being denied the respite that they were getting previously?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes. The Social Services and the respite providers have done their best with what they have and they have explored other options to see if there is any way that they can maybe, rather than providing respite in a respite home, take the children out somewhere, which gives the parents a bit of a break. That happens but it is still not ... it is a bit ad hoc, really. It is them doing their best with what they have. The other issue that has arisen is that my staff tend to then become the fill-in bank staff, evenings, weekends and holidays. My worry then is that my staff will burn out. It is quite a demanding job and especially the ones that do that work for the respite providers tend to be my staff who work with those most challenging youngsters and can cope, but the risk there is that you do the same to the staff as the families, that eventually they will not be able to do that any longer. It is a strategy but in terms of the long term it is not really a good one.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

You mentioned difficulties in transition planning as well. Your children stay at Mont à l'Abbé until they are 19.

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes, they can do.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Can you just elaborate a little bit more on how that happens?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes. At 14 plus our annual education reviews that we talked about earlier become transition meetings as well. So not only are we looking at the achievements over the year and planning for the next year in school, we start looking to the long term and moving youngsters on to school. One of the impacts of lack of provision is that those meetings tend to be taken up so much by parents' anxiety and worry about what will happen to my child when they are 19 that actually the focus of celebrating the achievement and all the good that they have done is actually lost. Many of the parents are worried that when their children get to 19 that they will have to give up work themselves in order to look after their adult children and, of course, that puts added pressure on to the family. It also makes it difficult for us to reassure parents and to signpost to them what might be available at 19 because we really do not know.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Can I just go back slightly? Did you say that currently your staff act as bank staff providing care evenings and weekends to those families in need?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

So obviously your staff are hugely experienced. When the children leave Mont à l'Abbé and they move from Oakwell or Eden House, do they then access respite at Highlands? I am just trying to explore the experience of the staff at that facility compared to the staff at the other facilities where they are catering and presumably have huge experience in dealing with children with complex needs, whether you ...

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

At the nursing home?

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Yes, because that is where the respite is provided at the moment for some young adults as well.

[14:00]

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

For adults, yes. At that point I have had very little contact with Highlands. We have to be careful because it is Highlands College that I have quite a lot of dealings with, where our youngsters might go at 16, our more able ones, but when the students have left us that is it, really, they have moved on. So we prepare them as best we can for where they are moving on to, but there is not a great deal of contact after that.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Okay, thank you.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Do you feel more could be done to provide different avenues for your pupils as they leave Mont à l'Abbé and progress in life?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes, it would be nice if we could get to the point where it was a person-centred planning. What tends to happen, and it is not just unique to Jersey, is you have to fit youngsters into what is available. But what is available is not great and even if the 16 year-olds go to Highlands College, they would not get a full-time placement. So if they are vulnerable and they are not at a college on a Friday, parents possibly then are faced with not working on Friday. Or sometimes we feel that they could cope at Highlands College if they had additional support. The support could perhaps come from day services to go with them to college and maybe that joined up across the 2 might help.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Are you aware of any families where after they have left Mont à l'Abbé at age 18, 19, that a parent or the main carer has actually had to give up paid work because ...

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

You are aware of families that that has actually happened to?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Because there simply is not the provision out in the public domain at the moment to assist them?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes.

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

So that does happen?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

I think some parents or perhaps some parents have said to me that at school we prepare them so much for an independent life and give them opportunities to communicate and to access the world and then actually those opportunities at 19 ... it is quite sad really because one parent said to me: "I do not know why you bothered. It would have been better if you had not done that because it has built up their expectations and it has built up our expectations." It is like showing them something and then saying that you cannot have it.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

What about school holidays, just briefly, Sharon? I am conscious of the time. Do you provide any services for children during the school holidays?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes and no. The school is a school, the same as anywhere else. There is a play scheme at the primary school, which there is an onsite manager. It is not me; I provide the facilities and the environment. They can use the school, we are very happy with that. One of my staff is actually the play scheme manager and it is a scheme run by Jim Westwater. It is like a Freedom ...

Deputy J.A. Hilton:

Freedom activity camps, yes.

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Yes, and that is part subsidised, I think by the Education Department, and the parents pay for that as well. If the parents had to pay the true cost of that I think it would be unaffordable because obviously our children need a very high level of staff. So it is part subsidised and it runs for 4 weeks in the summer and most days during the Christmas holidays and most days during the Easter holidays. There is not anything at the half terms. The parents might not get everything that they want, so out of the 4 weeks they might only be able to access 2 or 3 days per week. Social Services have also part funded some of those placements for our youngsters who need that monitoring or support during the holidays.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Would you say in your experience that the most regular time for families to find themselves in a crisis situation is when they are either facing or during school holidays?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

I think school holidays is certainly a pressure. I see families in crisis all of the time, to be quite honest. I would not say it is just during the school holidays. Some of our youngsters are extremely difficult to manage. I am talking about the children with behavioural issues. We find them challenging and we are a whole team. If anybody is showing any signs of burnout we have a very well-rehearsed regime in school that someone else comes and supports and someone else will take over and we work very much as a team. Some parents are on their own at home with those youngsters and they feel tremendous guilt. They want to be able to do their best for their children. I often say to them I have been doing this job for a very long time and I am very skilled and I would really struggle to do it. In that environment where you have not got all the things that we have to distract them and keep them occupied, and I have not got to cook the dinner at the same time as well or look after other children ...

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Sharon, can I ask, you talk about the school facilities you use for 4 weeks during the summer holidays and over Christmas and Easter. In your experience, do you think that there is an opportunity to use the facilities that are available, whether it be at Mont à l'Abbé Primary or at Haute Vallée to better effect and to supplement or provide some form of respite out of school hours?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

I think there is ... yes, there is a possibility. It provides an environment. Obviously, it would need staffing. I think there are some possibilities for that. It is a different ... for some children it presents difficulties in that I do not know whether you know in terms of autism, for instance, children very much are used to behaving in a way ... it is very location specific. So we have rules and expectations about what they do and in that environment. Quite often we find after the summer holidays and in September the first 3 weeks of term we are actually trying to get back to that because it is summer and they have had fun and that is great, you want them to have fun, but they get out of the routine of their schedules and what their learning intentions are, why they are there and what we are doing. So I would have some reservation that I would not want to dilute or make worse what is good. But I certainly think that some of our facilities, if they were staffed appropriately and safely and that people were trained to use the equipment - we have a fantastic pool there, for instance - there is no reason why that could not be used at the weekend. It is somewhere for children to go, but if the parents have to take them it is not necessarily respite for the families.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

I appreciate that. Have you had up to now any discussions with the Social Services Department and other agencies about better usage of facilities?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

Well, they have used them ... we have one boy who is full time in the respite home at the moment. They have come to school and used some of those facilities for him, but they have to have the staff to be able to do it. So it is not about them having a place to have the respite, it is actually about having the trained, skilled staff to do it safely. I think if they have that then there is no reason why they could not use the school.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Would the same be applicable to the unit at Haute Vallée?

Head Teacher, Mont à l'Abbé School:

The Haute Vallée site? The holiday scheme at the secondary site is not as extensive. It is just 4 weeks in the summer holidays. There is not anything at Christmas or at Easter. I think there was an issue about insurance, and the primary respite just went up to age 14 so then it is at the secondary site, and again one of my staff manages that. I am not quite sure how that is funded but I think that is between Education, Sport and Culture and I think Mencap did provide some support for it early on as well and I do not know whether it was Social Services, but there was a real initiative to try, let us get something, because 6 weeks obviously is a very long time, to try and get something, and it was 4 weeks. That has been running only 2 or 3 years. The facilities that we have at the secondary school, to be honest, our co-located site, apart from classrooms where the children actually learn, we have not got a great deal. It is just the classrooms. We try and access as much of Haute Vallée as we possibly can and the primary site is bigger, so our Haute Vallée, our secondary students, tend to come backwards and forwards. There is not as much opportunity there to use that site.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

I think we will close this section of the meeting if that is okay and I will ask the public and the media to leave at this point if you would. Thank you very much.

[Meeting proceeded in camera]

[14:09]