



Patron, Lady Dalton

Deputy R Ward
Chair
Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel
By email: a.harris5@gov.je

23rd October 2020

Dear Deputy Ward

Government Plan Review 2021-2024

Thank you for your letter emailed to the Jersey Child Care Trust on 13th October 2020 inviting our comments on the above Scrutiny Review.

Our comments are focused on the two projects that you highlighted for our comments and views.

Education Reform Programme p.52 R.111/2020 and p.40 – P.130/2020.

The Education Reform Programme presents a real opportunity to provide the foundations for a world class education system in Jersey, however without a focus on the earliest years, the foundations for children will not have been laid and it will be too late for them to gain the fullest benefits from accessing such a system. 80 % of a child's brain is developed by age 3 and 90% by age 5. The Government Plan refers to 'students' in this project, implying the focus is on children who are in schools with almost fully grown brains.

The evidence is extensive, clear and consistent; access to good quality preschool education best enables the social inclusion of children and their families, reduces cycles of deprivation and further closes the attainment gap experienced by children living in poverty and disadvantage.¹

We would support a more pluralistic approach to early years services, better integrating health, education and social security to support and enable *all* children and families to thrive. This would contribute significantly to the world class system that is aspired to.

Covid-19 – School's Catch-Up Programme – p.55 – R.111/2020 and p.38 – P.130/2020.

The case for investment in addressing the loss of learning and wider educational issues and support for children who are fallen behind most is to be expected and is supported by a growing body of emerging research and evidence². In particular, we support the

¹ Archer & Merrick, 2020; England's Department for Education, 2020; Education Select Committee, 2019; Heckman, 2016; Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2008.

² Hodges, 2020; Early Years Alliance, 2020; Archer & Merrick, 2020.

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proposed focus on those groups of children who have suffered as a result of Covid-19 however we would also expect this focus to prioritise those children in their earliest years. All the children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities supported by the Special Needs Inclusion Programme through JCCT have not had access to any therapeutic services since March. This has had a significant impact on their learning and development because whilst we have extended each child's support, this has lacked the specialist input of therapeutic service professionals. As a result, the impact of our investment has been reduced and we will see the outcomes of this in their forthcoming years at school and beyond.

The following anecdotal evidence may be of use for your panel too in relation to children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and reduced hours of access to Government Foundation Stage settings or classes. Two children who transitioned from their private nurseries where the JCCT provided their inclusion support, into Government settings in September, have had their hours of access reduced due to a lack of capacity to meet their needs. A professional colleague outside of our organisation also noted that these are not isolated cases and that this has occurred for others. We would expect that the Covid-19 School's Catch Up Programme would be equally for *all* children and that evidence supports the case that the needs of children with SEND will be equal to, if not greater, than their peers.

We thank you for your invitation to take part in this process and would welcome your comments or further questions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "FVacher".

Fiona Vacher
Executive Director