

STATES OF JERSEY



PROPOSED GOVERNMENT PLAN 2022 - 2025 (P.90/2021): SEVENTEENTH AMENDMENT (P.90/2021 AMD.(17)) – COMMENTS

TARGETED NURSERY EDUCATION FUND FUNDING FOR 2-3 YEAR OLDS

**Presented to the States on 9th December 2021
by the Council of Ministers**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

The Minister for Children and Education rejects this amendment on the basis that although we, as a Council of Ministers through our approval of the Early Years Policy Development Board (EYPDB) report, fully agree and support proposals in principle to provide targeted funding for 2–3-year-olds, there is a lot more work to be done in accordance with this EYPDB recommendation, before we can accurately calculate the amount required.

Any policy change of this significance should allow families and childcare providers to have the time to plan for such changes, as many will already have their childcare and business plans in place for September 2022.

There are many issues to address before an accurate and informed bid can be submitted:

1. How many hours of targeted childcare would be offered?
2. How any children will be eligible to receive this?
3. Is their sufficient capacity in the childcare sector?
4. What would be an agreed hourly rate to fund this?

The Minister notes the below excerpt from the EYPDB report which clearly highlights the significant amount of important groundwork required before delivering this aspiration. Implementation of a targeted offer without completing this vital preparation has many serious risks. These risks include: unknown demand, leading to potential higher future costs; an existing commitment to this as a long-term goal; diminished private sector engagement, and reduced quality of provision for existing young children.

While the Board's aspiration is to provide a universal early education offer for 2–3 year olds it is recognised that this will be a longer-term goal.

In the first instance, a funding infrastructure would be required along with a scoping programme to consider how children of this age at risk of disadvantage could be identified, placements sourced and offers made to families.

While the initial focus is on children with identified developmental needs, extension to a universal offer is proposed as part of a longer-term plan. Eligibility for the funded hours could be from the start of the Autumn Term (September) after a child turns 2 until they start at school the academic year after they turn 4.

Scoping of a range of providers could provide information about the availability of places which would also be informed by the Best Start Plus nursery places currently organised by JCCT and funded from multiple charitable sources. Determinants of quality provision, the rate of funding, commissioning and administration arrangements would need to be put in place.

As laid out in the report we need to fully engage and consult with the stakeholders who are key to implementing this new policy ambition, including the private nursery sector, our third sector partners and families.

Through the Best Start Programme of work, we have a clear priority plan for our short, medium, and long term aims that support the intentions of the Early Years Policy

Development Board. Through consultation, engagement, and collaboration, we will put forward timely and appropriate business cases for future funding needs.

Financial Implications

The amendment as proposed increases Consolidated Fund expenditure by £750,000 in 2022.

In total it increases expenditure by £3 million over the period of the Plan. If accepted this amendment will result in lower surpluses in 2023-2025 years of the plan, preventing them being able to be applied to reduce borrowing for Covid.

In respect of 2022 (subject to the outcome of other amendments) this amendment would result in a negative balance on the Consolidated Fund. This would mean the Government Plan could not be approved by the Assembly under Article 14 of the Public Finances Law.

Accordingly, there would be a need to suspend the debate before final approval, to enable an amendment to be prepared in order to balance the Plan for 2022.

Statement under Standing Order 37A [Presentation of comment relating to a proposition]:

These comments were submitted to the States Greffe after the noon deadline as set out in Standing Order 37A due to time constraints from the States Meeting being moved forward to Monday 13th December, which in turn affected the final deadline for Comments, and the requirement to undertake final due diligence and review processes.
