



# Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

## Quarterly Review Hearing

### Witness: The Minister for Children and Education

Wednesday, 28th June 2023

**Panel:**

Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central (Chair)

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville

**Witnesses:**

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North - Minister for Children and Education

Connétable R.P. Vibert of St. Peter - Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1)

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour - Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2)

Mr. R. Sainsbury - Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.

Mr. S. O'Regan - Group Director for Education

Ms. J. Dempster - Associate Director, Children's Social Care

Dr. D. Bowring - Associate Director, Children's Health and Well-being

[09:31]

**Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central (Chair):**

Okay, so welcome to this quarterly hearing of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. Today is 28th June. I would like to draw everyone's attention to the following. This hearing will be filmed and streamed live. The recording and transcript will be published afterwards on the States Assembly website. All electronic devices, including mobile phones, should be switched to silent. If we begin with the introductions. I am Deputy Catherine Curtis, the Chair of the panel.

**Connétable M. Labey of Grouville:**

My name is Martin Labey, Connétable of Grouville. I am a member of that panel.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Deputy Inna Gardiner, Minister for Children and Education.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):**

Richard Vibert, Assistant Minister for Children and Education.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

Deputy Louise Doublet, Assistant Minister for Children and Education.

**Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:**

Rob Sainsbury, Chief Officer with the Department for C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills).

**Associate Director, Children's Health and Well-being:**

Darren Bowring, Associate Director for Children's Health and Well-being.

**Group Director for Education:**

Séan O'Regan, Group Director for Education.

**Associate Director, Children's Social Care:**

Joanne Dempster, Associate Director for Children's Social Care.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay, thank you, everyone. Just to say that Deputy Porée has sent her apologies. She cannot be here today. We have 2 hours, I think, and we have a lot of questions. If we start with you first.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Thank you very much. Thank you, Chair, and thank you, everybody. We are going to start the questions this morning about the forthcoming teaching strikes. Minister, thank you for your response on 20th June to our letter in respect of the strikes. You advised that it was too early to anticipate any level of accuracy of the level of disruption that may be caused by industrial action. Are you able to estimate absence for each school in advance or will you only know the staff action and the resulting impact on the day of the strike?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Thank you for your question. First of all, it is important to emphasise that my team have been working since last week and have ongoing engagement with schools regarding planned industrial

action. An action that one union is going to industrial action and another union is to stop strike action, which might affect school openings. As you are aware, according to the law, we cannot ask staff, if they belong to the union, if they are going on strike. We have received the numbers of each representative union in each school so we can have approximate assessment. So therefore parents and carers would wait to hear from the school directly. Saying this, it is all moving at a very fast pace and from yesterday evening - and I checked if I can speak about it - the States Employment Board offered arbitration to NEU and NASUWT to resolve it. We are waiting for the response from the union.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Obviously as a panel we are concerned about ...

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Absolutely, and I am concerned as the Minister because as the Minister I am responsible for delivering education to the children, I am responsible for the policies and providing that children at school receive the necessary education is a matter of importance for us.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

If I may, a supplementary? Is there any concern about any particular school that has a high level of that particular union in their school?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I have not received any indication. Séan, have you received any indication?

**Group Director for Education:**

Indeed, thank you, Minister. We have some schools with in excess of 40 members of the union taking strike action on 5th July. But, as the Minister has said, it is difficult to ascertain because while the unions with the ballot results shared the numbers of members of each school there is no means of identifying which members and therefore which classes or subjects they teach. It makes forward planning very difficult.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

But, again, following the development yesterday we will hear from the union if they will agree to go into the arbitration and the strikes need to be called off if they are going to arbitration.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

It seems the logical next step.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

It seems the logical next stage so it is something we would like to progress and resolve, understand it from their point of view.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Excellent. Our next question was about your contingency planning but clearly we have already discussed that, so thank you very much. Are there any written details of your contingency planning for these particular emergencies that we could share?

**Group Director for Education:**

That work is done at the school level. We are collating feedback from headteachers as to whether they can be fully open, partially open or if the strike goes through whether we will have to close, because obviously out of respect for parents and carers who have to make arrangements, headteachers have been keen that the school by school level is recorded there.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Excellent. I mean the considerable task of communicating with parents about such matters must be, as I said, absolutely enormous but what are your plans for communicating with parents at this stage?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

It is the headteachers. As a mother I received a letter from my daughter's school. I think I met all secondary headteachers 10 days ago and I met all primary school teachers last Wednesday. We did discuss with each one of them their own plans, and they will communicate direct to the parents and obviously we will know as a department what the arrangements are. We will try to support them as we can from the central.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Let us hope the arbitration ...

**Minister for Children and Education:**

The offer for arbitration will be taken up and we can get a result.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

All is well. Moving on. While responsibility for the pay negotiations obviously sit with the States Employment Board, your letter to the panel references that your officers meet with school staff on a quarterly basis to discuss and agree by negotiation on areas outside of pay.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Please could you outline some of the areas where negotiations have taken place?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I received an email from representatives from 2 unions and I responded yesterday. I had an official chat with one of them but where we are standing is that I would like to work with the unions about how we can support inclusion around extra staff, around providing training, workload. There are lots of areas that we can support that will come together in a package. I am waiting for suggestions from the unions and we will arrange the meeting. So we did have an exchange during the last week and am waiting now for the submission and will consider what we can put into the Government Plan for future discussion.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

That was the next part of my actual question in this line. Those concerns raised by teachers about improvements and your support in that way going forward is putting it into the Government Plan, so thank you very much.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes. So if you would like more details about engagement from the officers' perspective, I think Séan can share.

**Group Director for Education:**

Happy to, Minister. We have a quarterly meeting of senior officers with all of the education representing unions. Historically it was the Teachers and the Headteachers Union but now it is all the support staff unions that are fundamentally built on department ... under the Minister's areas to discuss and, indeed, generated by each of the unions. We, quite separate to that, have a workstream on teachers in terms of conditions where all of the unions locally and their regional representatives have met to frame the workstream on everything from teachers' contracts to workload, to supplementary allowance points, the additional remuneration for extra work, for the number of training days, for professional development of staff. We have around 14, 15 strands to do a branch review of terms and conditions, working alongside the unions with the clear proviso as you have pointed out, Connétable, that matters of pay are separate because that is under the States Employment Board.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

We understand. Thank you very much.

**Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:**

I would just add to that an area where we do need to have greater engagement that has been identified through those meetings is around broad government policy application. There are 2 specific things that the unions have highlighted where we need stronger engagement and partnership around and a little more workshop approaches. That is in relation to parental leave and the volunteering policy set by the Government. So I think the policy areas there that we need to work on, the area around education reform and inclusion, is actually incredibly positive, we have a lot of interface with the unions and the headteachers around that.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Excellent. Thank you very much.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay, so now I have some questions about children's services. Minister, thank you for your written response to the panel's queries about the inspection reports on the 3 unregistered children's homes. You confirmed that the development of procedures and guidance to support practitioners is ongoing. Are you able to provide us with some more detail about how much work is needed and whether any priority areas have been identified?

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):**

In addressing issues of the emergency accommodation, we have ... 2 new homes have been offered, each caring for less than 5 children and they were opened in May 2023. I think that proves that emergency accommodation is not something that we wish to have to use but you cannot always have sufficient accommodation and, in fact, we had already been looking for accommodation at the time. The properties were identified and we worked closely with the Jersey Care Commission and the homes have in fact been delivered extremely quickly. Those circumstances where we needed emergency accommodation have been dealt with and I would hope that certainly at present we have sufficient accommodation. So that is an answer to the ... what was the other ...

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

It is about procedures and guidance as well to support the practitioners, that the development for this ongoing following this ...

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):**

Well, it is something that is constantly ongoing and obviously there are regular reports on all the homes and we address any gaps in people's knowledge and have the staff trained to the appropriate level. You know, that is standard practice now.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I think lessons learned from the department and all my team's perspective, one of the major points that was raised is about notifications. It has been completely ratified, it is completely crystal clear if we are facing this situation that might happen that we need to manage the accommodation. Even though that it is called our decision it is not solely our decision, we still have a duty to notify the regulator. So this is first lessons learned and it is clear, there is no discussion and everyone needs to follow the process. Second, we have had a meeting with the Care Commissioner and Rob and Richard were part of it, and we discussed what we must have as a contingency in place if the emergency requirement comes in and, for example, it needs to be clear that we have a registered and trained manager.

[09:45]

In 2 places we did have but in another we did not, but because there was no framework in advance we are now creating clarity. I think one of the difficulties that officers raised back in December when it all happened ... because we found the letters from the previous Care Commissioner that emergency accommodations were opened and you register. This was the way of working. I am not saying it is right. So we are putting a clear framework in place. We need notifications and clarity of what needs to be in place to meet the requirement because we all agree that emergency accommodations cannot be inspected as established care homes because it is 2 different settings. But it means that we need to put these procedures in place.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):**

I would say that I would not blame the staff who were responsible for the emergency accommodation in any way because looking at the letters from the previous Commissioner it was very much a case of either you close or you give us a date for closure. Quite different from the current approach, they did not know that. It was not the first time that this accommodation had been used and so I would not blame them in any way because, given the circumstances in December their first thought was the safety of the children and that is what they achieved. They achieved that safety.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Saying this, we need more provision and this is why we are looking into the foster care. We need intensive foster care, we need intensive ... we need emergency accommodation within the foster care that we are missing because something that can be put quicker ... so you have an emergency

foster care list and see who is available because everyone was already registered, everyone passed the training so we know that we did not have sufficiency and this is what we are working towards, increased sufficiency and to have this framework in place that was not there previously.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

I understand your point about no blame but if I just jump forward slightly to another question. These reports show there was no statement of purpose or young person's guide in place in these unregistered homes. This is something quite basic, is it not? So we do not want to apportion blame but what about responsibility? Should the children not have the basics that they need?

**Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:**

I agree, I think there are lots of lessons learned in this. In our communication with the J.C.C. (Jersey Care Commission) what is really clear and what is most important and what we have done since this incident is we have to have clear notification of follow up with them. We have some work to do to make sure that all the protocols and all the processes are absolutely crystal clear. We believe in that. What it is really to saying to us is that we need to think differently about the residual capacity and about making sure we have the capability to step up really quickly with a registered manager, with the workforce, make sure all of those procedures are in place and we are working with the J.C.C. step by step in that arrangement, making sure the child rights assessments are undertaken, making sure all of those concerns that have been identified in those 3 incidents are addressed if we are ever in that position going forward.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):**

You know, that is something we have taken very seriously and we have learnt from this incident. As Rob says, we are working with the Jersey Care Commissioner to ensure that any issues are rectified.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay, thanks. I have another question which is whether there is a checklist or procedure to undertake risk assessments on the locations where children might be placed. So is that always looked through now at risk assessment in the location?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Absolutely.

**Associate Director, Children's Social Care:**

Yes, it is. Yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**



So it would be good if we could see the ... if it is possible, if we could see the forms for the risk assessment and know who is responsible for completing these. My other question is: what internal oversight and examination is there of completion of the child placement procedures? So the actual oversight of the procedure itself.

**Associate Director, Children's Social Care:**

The oversight of the development of the procedures sits with myself as the Associate Director for Children's Social Care with my team of heads of service. We are writing our procedures internally and we have support to do that from our delivery unit colleague who is working with us and we are also working to fulfil the standards of the Care Commission, because we are now almost registered with the Care Commission under the new law. So we are having to develop our procedures in line with the Care Commission's standards as well as the day-to-day operations of the service. That is how we are doing it.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

So thinking about it, we have inspection of the children's care homes with the Care Commissioner once a year but we have our monthly independent inspection of all children's homes. We receive monthly a report with recommendations, we have now a tracker that was created back in December and we have monthly meetings on a ministerial level to go through all recommendations from month to month of what has been addressed and what has not been addressed, what is in plans, and we can see the closure of recommendations. So in children's homes it is monthly independent reports of our services. Emergency accommodation and placement in emergency accommodation is going through the robust procedure of what we have first in place in children's homes, what we have in foster care and as a last resort - and it was a last resort because we shared in the letter that we have sent to you that it was really very small - the 3 that were placed elsewhere. We are reducing this. I am sure that you are aware that all children services came under regulations and inspections of the Care Commissioner during this year. As Joanne was saying, we are preparing for the first inspection. C.A.M.H.S. will be inspected, schools will be inspected and children's services will be inspected by the Care Commissioner going forward.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That should be this year then?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):**

Yes.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Some things started this year.

**Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:**

Towards the end of this year, going into early next year. We are very happy about this because it enables the Jersey Care Commission to have more systemic overview of all of our services. What we experienced in December was that while the Commission is able to inspect and look at a specific arm of the service, like residential services, it does not have a line of sight to the children's services case load, to the intensive foster services, and it needs to understand all of those branches. Now, we will have all of the breadth of our services and that is why the work that Joanne is doing is important because it has to span all of our services not just one distinct part and one provision arm. So it is a positive thing for us.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Good. Good. All right, so I have ... in the letter that you sent to us dated 2nd June, there is a reference there to working with an external highly regarded organisation to assist in the improvement and transformation of residential services.

**Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:**

It is an exploratory discussion.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Can I finish the question? I was going to say could you provide some information about this? Does this approach replicate approaches taken in other jurisdictions such as the U.K. (United Kingdom) and, if so, what evidence have you seen that this is the best approach?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Okay. We have had meetings in Scotland. I met with The Promise Scotland, I met with Celcis and we have had discussions with the Children's Commissioner as well. From my understanding the options that we are thinking to incorporate are acceptable. I do not want to mention specific organisations who would do which part because it is still in development but we are progressing and from my ... the evidence that was presented to me for the improvements that are happening is compelling and this is where we are going.

**Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:**

We have also engaged with other partners. We have talked to the Local Government Association in the U.K., we have had peer review from Wandsworth Local Authority last summer. We are not

just looking at Scotland, we are looking at areas of excellence and where there has been areas of improvement that could be relevant to us. The reason why we are interested in Scotland is because the vision of the promise is delivering what was felt to be some significant system change within that area. That is why we are engaged.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

It is very child centred as well.

**Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:**

Yes, it is.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Very child centred, yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Will we see some information about this, about how it is working, at some point?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I think that we are very close to finalising the plan and would be happy to give a briefing. Also you would be invited ... I think, we are creating forums for States Members, for Scrutiny, to share, to seek your views. I think it will be some time in September or October according to the plans. So, yes, a private briefing plus inclusion in the workshops.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Good. So my next question is just about numbers. Can you provide us with the current number of registered children's homes across the Island and how many children per year are placed or need to be placed in these homes?

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):**

We have 6, is it not, 6 registered children's homes and currently we have 13 children across those 6 homes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Thank you. My last question on this subject generally is about something that was in the past. In 2010 a therapeutic facility for children called Hope House was closed down, with lack of support from Government given as the reason. Was there a review done of the closure of Hope House, any lessons learned, anything like that?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I can answer personally because I was involved in 2021 as the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee and I could not get an idea why we are not taking the offer. I have to be honest, I was very clear then with the department, that was a challenge of the department, because I thought that maybe it is not exactly what may be needed but I can see how we could ... now, when I know all the details, how it could be used. Since I was elected as a Minister I had meetings but Hope House is closed, it is not something that we can reopen. I had a meeting with Silkworth and we discussed this. Currently it is not there and they moved on and they are doing different things. This happened.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Would it be any use to look at what happened to see if any lessons could be learned for the future?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I think there are several lessons. From my perspective, we are moving towards a more flexible approach because what I can see the diversity of the issues, they ... every child has different needs and they have so many different complex needs so we know that we need to provide specific care for specific children. So we are looking, at least in this term ... I know what happened in 2021 but it is not my place to comment, I was not part of the team and I am sure that I am missing some information that I do not have but because we are moving to a more flexible approach any type of this accommodation can be used. If you speak with them, they say: "This is our needs, how can you meet our needs?" I am sure that a solution or compromise could be found. We are speaking with different providers now, we are really reaching out because we cannot do it all, we need to do it in collaboration with the charities. We cannot hold everything in house. Unfortunately it happened and my lessons learned, let us look at what can be offered and how we can meet our needs with them and find a common ground.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That is good. I only raise it because I am thinking that for several years it is possible that there were children who did not get their needs served that could have done. Anyway, thank you for that. Moving on.

[10:00]

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Yes, indeed. On 2nd June, the U.N. (United Nations) Committee on the Rights of the Child published a report which recommended that Jersey develop a legislative framework to ensure a child a rights based approach, for supporting children placed in care off-Island and also ensuring that those

placements were only used as a last resort. Minister, what is your response to this recommendation and will you take it forward with legislation?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

First of all, I would like to see less children placed off the Island. Let us start from this. The less children placed off the Island the better. We have already seen a reduction in the numbers of children placed off the Island and during the almost a year that I am in my job we have shared numbers with you, but because it is under 5 I cannot share but we have substantial reduction. Now, we must separate the legislation and reciprocal agreement between the jurisdictions because schedule 2.4 of the Children's Law provides for arrangements to assist children to live outside Jersey. So it is within our law. This expressly provides where the Minister applies to the court. I am going to the court to arrange for any child in my care to live outside of Jersey and the court must be satisfied that (a) it would be in the child's best interests to live outside of Jersey, (b) suitable arrangements have been or will be made for the child's reception and welfare in the country in which the child will live, (c) the child has consented to live in the country - except where the court is satisfied the child does not have sufficient understanding - and (d) if the parent or responsible person consented and except from a person for whom the court is satisfied cannot not be found capable of consenting or withholding it unreasonably. So for the case study it is very important to put the facts in place. We go to the court, we put the application to the court on behalf and it takes about 6 to 8 months because the court needs to be really satisfied there is not any other option than to place the child off the Island. The moment the child is placed off the Island we immediately notify the local authority so the child has all the provision there. We also have our social worker in touch monthly. The child is offered advocacy. I picked this up after this report because the child was offered advocacy the first time and if the child declined we did not have a process to go back and I would like to see the child to be offered the advocacy service every month. So we have our law, what is missing, and this is where some misinterpretation happens, and it is very detailed. It took me time to understand it. It is about a reciprocal agreement between us and the U.K. This is what we are working ... I sent a letter ... so in Scotland it took them 4 years to put this reciprocal agreement in place with England and Wales. We are advanced with the process and yesterday I again signed off a letter to my counterpart in the U.K., Westminster, to emphasise how this agreement is important. What we are working on with the Children's Commissioner is to put more policy guidance in place based on what Scotland did because it is something that can be done quicker. I am not sure, Joanne or Rob, if you would like to add something? I would like to separate there is a legal framework and we legally, according to Jersey law, can place children off the Island and children remain in my care. I am not passing care to the U.K.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Okay.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

It is still our children ...

**Minister for Children and Education:**

It is our children.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

It is still Jersey children.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

The reciprocal agreement between us and the U.K. is not in place and this is what we are working on.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

All right. Is there a timeframe to work within? Do you think you will establish that?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

It is now with the U.K. We had challenges. Officers tried to do a lot since December, I have seen the letter exchange and I involved external relations. They are supporting us because it is a U.K. decision. I understand we might not be a top priority and I tried to raise how important this is to us.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):**

But you do have an agreement with the local authority where that home is. So it is not that there is not an agreement in place.

**Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:**

Yes, the work we need to do ... we have clear agreements with the provider and we do checks around the children who are placed off-Island in terms of social worker assessment, advocacy, which as the Minister says we will make sure that is repeat offered not just for a fixed period. We also have an initiative called Mind of My Own which Joanne can describe, which has really good uptake actually over recent months. The key work that we are doing and we will be doing with the Children's Commissioner is around to make sure that the checklist is in place, we are absolutely satisfied to make sure all of the child rights assessment is undertaken. Things like ensuring that there are clear understandings of the processes around safeguarding, access to healthcare like a G.P. (general practitioner), all of that is in place and it is formalising all of those arrangements is what we are working into our joint work with the Children's Commissioner.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

For me the top thing in my mind is what is in the best interests of the child. This is for me is a guiding role because we are really looking at how there is a child that could be placed in the U.K. back in January and because we wanted to check and we wanted to be completely sure it has happened. There are situations when the child experiences extreme trauma, we do not have these facilities and if the child will go through the process and will be better in 2 years' time, we would be looking to bring ... I think that if they are placed in the U.K. it does not matter for specific circumstances that we will not be able to provide whatever this child needs. It is in the best interests of the child. We can always revisit and see if the child is in a better place, stabilised and we can ... once we have a therapeutic children's home we will have more options. There are several sites identified. I hope in 2024 we can ... it depends how the planning application would go. Joanne, would you like to add something?

**Associate Director, Children's Social Care:**

Yes, I agree. I think the pathway to seek permission from the court is very clear in terms of what needs to be addressed and taken into account when we are thinking of a plan for a child is best that they go off-Island. The service does not stop once children live in their new settings off-Island. Social workers continue to work with the children and go to the U.K. to do their visits. We have an app based method that we are actively encouraging children to use to keep in touch with us. That is the Mind of My Own method. More children are taking this up. We are seeing more communication with our service from children directly. I can read those statements and see what children are saying to us if they are not happy with their care settings, trying to get professionals, schools and carers to promote this with the children so they have a direct line of communication into the service. Children who are placed off-Island, who have been placed off-Island for some time have had success and we have some real positive outcomes for some of the children that have been living in care settings over in the U.K. Obviously cannot go into detail about who those children are but we have had some really good outcomes for our young people who are living over in the U.K. It is not the ideal situation to put forward a plan to take a child off the Island and there are gaps in our resourcing here on the Island that we are very aware of and trying to address. Our sufficiency remains a challenge so you will see campaigns out there asking people to come forward to be foster carers and to be assessed. You will see campaigns out there for carers to come forward to work in our children's homes as well. So there is a lot of activity going on to recruit people to come and support us in what we are trying to do. But for those children that unfortunately go to live off-Island right now we are exercising our decision making around their best interests, their safety and their future outcomes.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Because in that same letter, Minister, on 2nd June it was stated that there are 17 children in care that are currently looked after off-Island so as a panel we were a little alarmed about that, how high that is. But my further question, if I may, what you said was it was a reciprocal agreement, because of our facilities or lack of here on-Island, if we are reciprocating it for them, have they sent any children in this direction?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

No, the reciprocal agreement is the care orders, when a child is moved to the U.K., move into the U.K. because the care orders currently are Jersey care orders and they are sitting with me and a reciprocal ... they will not accept our care orders. We were left out a long time ago compared to other jurisdictions like Isle of Man, for example, they are included. Scotland joined recently and we are hopeful ... I hope my letter of yesterday or 2 days ago ... literally this week I send a letter to my counterpart hoping it will speed the process and we will see some movements from the U.K.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Okay, thank you very much. Right, moving on. Minister, at the last quarterly hearing in March we heard that there were 40 full-time equivalent posts currently filled by agency staff in children's social care. What work has been carried out to move away from agency workers and employing full-time contract employees instead?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Thank you very much for asking this question because there is a lot of work, delivery unit work with the skills and in March this year we moved to social care. We have seen the results that just arrived. I have data for January where we have 46 permanent staff and 54 agency, it was reduced in March but currently we have 64 permanent staff. Sorry, 64 per cent of permanent including candidates who accepted our offers. So our conversion, we added 18 per cent more of the permanent staff compared to January.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

It is going in the right direction?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

So it is going in the right direction. So if we accept in January we had 54 per cent of our staff as agency now we have only 36 per cent agency. It is still high and we are still worried about the number but, as we know, it is just time and I think we are really encouraged by the response and how the things are moving and how we can present a better number in the next public hearing that we will have.



**The Connétable of Grouville:**

We are constantly thinking about the high cost of living, high cost of housing in the Island so we are concerned about that as a panel.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I think what is good is the delivery unit came into the office and yesterday we had a presentation. If previously Health was worried for the key worker accommodation themselves and we, as Education, tried to put in different arrangements and social care. Now we have one team working and we are reassured that we have what we call lending accommodations for nominal cost like not the cost we would pay at Liberty Apartments and we have capacity within the government portfolio. It is really encouraging that Children and Social Care and Education are on that list. So we are included, we are not separated. It is not that everyone in the team needs to find accommodation so I hope it will help.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

That is excellent. Supplementary. In March 2023 there was an article detailing that University College Jersey was developing a new social work degree model. Can you provide some further information on this degree model and will it be commencing in September this year?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

It will be commencing in September. We call it a high apprenticeship. It means that one day will be at the college ... it is developed in partnership with Plymouth University so the degree that the graduates will receive will be a degree in social work at Plymouth University. One day is in the college and 4 days practical work learning within the settings. So some will be Children and Social Care, some will be with other providers.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

High practical side of it.

[10:15]

**Minister for Children and Education:**

High practical side. I had a very good conversation, and I hope it will progress, with the Guernsey Chief Minister when he was on the Island last week because we recognise they are missing social workers, we are missing social workers and to make sure that courses will progress and it is only one day in college, 4 days in practical, they are looking now to join us. If we develop different type of programmes for key professions, specialists in various areas they might develop professionals so we will start to work collaboratively to make sure that the courses can go forward because this is the

economy of scale. You have candidates from 2 Islands and it is better capacity and better experience.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Absolutely.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Can I just ask an extra question on that one? Has there been much information out to people who might want to do this degree?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

From my understanding it was publicised. Again, I can ask Highlands to provide more information. Absolutely. I know that they had good response from ... we had an informal catch up, it had a good response but I would be happy to ask them to provide more information about this course and how the application process will go and where they advertise.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes, thanks.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

The secondary schools I think would be a wonderful place to target that communication. Minister, in May the annual fostering fortnight took place with the objective of raising the profile of fostering a child. Can you provide an update to the panel as to the success of this event?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Just checking. Do you know?

**Associate Director, Children's Social Care:**

I would need to get the accurate figures, I do not want to provide figures that might not be accurate. The awareness raising events continue throughout the year so it is not just within fostering fortnight, we have a presence at many events on the Island and a small group of people within our fostering team will go to those events and you will see them there with their stall and raising awareness. There is a whole programme in place for the year. The events are successful so they are visual, they are visible, people are out there encouraging people to be curious about fostering because fostering is not just taking a child into your home to live with you, there are different variations on fostering that people can become approved for and so the different types of fostering would meet different people's needs in terms where they are at in their life situations. We do have a lot of interest and then the numbers that come through obviously reduce down through the process so we might

have a lot of enquiries, people calling our call lines, following up on the idea of fostering, they will have discussions with the team and then think about it and then come back to us or we will come back to them to follow up with that. Then comes the skills to fostering training that people go on and they go through that process and if people still want to do fostering they will then go into the full fostering assessment. So as we go through that process we have some numbers that fall away and people's decisions change and their life circumstances change, meaning that they might not be at that point in time ready to take on the care of children. The accurate numbers I can get for you in terms of fostering fortnight but we are constantly present at events, constantly trying to raise awareness of our needs and what the Island needs in terms of increasing our sufficiency to care for children.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

It is a wonderful facility so we wish you well with it.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Joanne, if I am correct, we have 8 fosters coming this summer from our previous campaign that have gone all the way through.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

They have gone all the way?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, they are coming physically. It is people this summer that have gone all the way and they are starting.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Thank you very much.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):**

We also now have regular meetings with the fostering associations. I have set those up so we have a closer relationship with them in understanding any issues. That, in future, will help to retain fosterers. It is something we should have perhaps done in the past but that is now set up.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Because the retention is something that we keep coming back to as a panel and we are very keen on that.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That is good, because I know in the past some foster carers have felt that their voices were not heard so that is really good.

**Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:**

The other key message that we have from our colleagues there is that the turnover and attrition within social work particularly has been problematic because they are dealing with so many different practitioners. As we start to stabilise the workforce that will also make a big difference that will also help.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Improve, yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

It will be better for everyone, yes.

**Chief Officer, C.Y.P.E.S.:**

Yes, much better.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

All right, so I have questions about Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. So the first one is please could you update the panel about the new neurodevelopment pathway in C.A.M.H.S.?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I will start with that neuro development services started this year and personally I have seen people come in and talking about it, and we have engagement from the public and it has been accepted really well. We know that we have increasing capacity for A.D.H.D. (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and autism assessment. Also we have clinicians that have worked overtime on the weekends to increase this capacity. Six additional members of staff will have completed their A.D.O.S. (Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule) and A.D. (Asperger Disorder) training for assessment in September 2023. An education psychologist has been employed on a temporary contract to carry out the assessments. We are trying hard to make sure that the assessments will be done as quick as possible. We are also looking to recruit a local G.P. to take on 2 days a week and see how we are utilising funds and bring G.P.s in. What is important to maybe explain and understand is that the average help referrals we had to A.D.H.D. ... no, to C.A.M.H.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service). We will start with the C.A.M.H.S. because this is the numbers that are important. If in 2020 we have 683 referrals, between January and May this year, only in 5 months, we have 710. So we are talking about a high percentage of referrals for ... it is growing. If you are looking at 2020, we have 192 referrals for A.D.H.D. and 100 for autism, in 2023 only between

January and May we have already 253. So we have a higher number, almost by 100, in 5 months than we have 2 years ago. I think what is happening that is that people are becoming more aware. When I look to where the referrals are coming from, we have increased referrals coming from school. So if a year ago it was 40 per cent referring from school, this year it is 45 per cent of the referrals coming from schools. So as we are going with the inclusion ...

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

This is a good thing that there is more awareness.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Yes, it is greater awareness. It is tremendous.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Do you think as well it might be because in the past all the girls with A.D.H.D. or autism were ignored and did not get the help they needed and that is starting to change.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I think you are right, it has started to change. We started to be more aware that it is ... also we had more referrals, a small percentage, from G.P.s because it is kind of feels ... I would be happy for Darren to expand because it was your leadership that brought this service together.

**Associate Director, Children's Health and Well-being:**

It is certainly a pressured area for C.A.M.H.S. If you think last year we had 617 requests for diagnostic assessments for A.D.H.D. and autism and this year to date, as the Minister describes, 406. It remains our number one pressure. It is positive in the fact that schools in particular are noticing earlier features of neurodiversity. Last year we had 48 per cent of the referral were female. Again, that is positive because diagnostic rates in girls have historically been low and underdiagnosed and we see the domination of females. It is positive in lots of ways that these young people are being noted, they are being put forward for diagnostic assessment. What is important as an Island is we do not just rely on the diagnostic assessment and the treatment they may receive on C.A.M.H.S. but as a collective we review what changes we need to make in terms of how we adapt environments, how we adapt approaches, be that in schools, in workforces and in community events so children are included and their needs are met. That is a part of what we are trying to do with the neurodevelopmental service is promote this idea of neurodiversity. The Minister has described how we are working really hard to increase capacity in this area. Last year we completed diagnostic assessments on average in 18 weeks. This year it is a push with the numbers. We are around 30 weeks which we are desperately trying to get lower. If you compare that across the water in the U.K., some local authorities are suggesting between 3 and 5 years at the moment for

diagnostic assessments. You will have seen on the BBC even last month, Bristol are now changing their thresholds and suggesting they are only diagnosing young people with autism if they are at risk of severe behavioural presentation or exclusion from school. We are doing better, in a way, but we are continuing to include and to diagnose, but it does remain a challenge. Capacity remains a challenge. What we are also trying to do though is provide greater support regardless of diagnosis while people are waiting. So our new service manager who started in March is working very hard to provide additional support, we are going to have numbers of workshops and drop in sessions for parents, they are going to happen on a regular basis. We have lots of courses for young people and parents to access on education around neurodevelopmental needs, on unassociated issues such as support with behaviour, anxiety, sleep, food intake and all the other bits that come with it. We have loads of plans and they are going to start to be introduced in the coming year.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

It is important to note as well that even though some children might be waiting to be assessed and possibly diagnosed, the schools will be already, on the whole, making accommodations for those children where their behavioural needs are presented. The teachers will not be waiting. I think from what I have seen of our schools and the teachers there are already excellent at including children with neurodiverse needs.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I think since the funding came into schools for the inclusion, the 6 million extra funding for the inclusion last year which was voted, is making a huge difference. At the moment every school has a dedicated special education needs co-ordinator. This is how you have a ready professional in the school working with the child and with the parents as C.A.M.H.S. can progress with the assessment.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

It is a cultural change as well, I think. Darren mentioned as an Island I think we are on a tipping point of that cultural understanding of neurodiversity and I am seeing that in the charity sector with the all neurodiversity matters. I had a meeting with them that they are doing some fantastic work supporting parents so we are hoping to support them a bit more so that they can support the families and everybody working together.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

I would like to say personally that I have actually benefited, our family have benefited from this service so we are very grateful for the excellent treatment that my wife and I and my daughter have had, so thank you.

**Associate Director, Children's Health and Well-being:**

That is very nice to hear.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

I can I have children with A.D.H.D. and with autism and I can certainly see the huge improvement in schools as well.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Yes, so congratulations.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

But there is still a lot of work ...

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Still a lot to do. Still a lot to do.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Moving on to a condition, which seems to be still not recognised well enough, I am not talking about Jersey particularly but everywhere, about F.A.S.D. (Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder). Will this be incorporated as part of the pathway?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

There is good news probably, and thank you for raising this with me. We worked with the panel on this matter from the beginning of my tenure. First to all, within the neurodevelopment service we have a community paediatrician doctor that has been employed. All children who are referred on this path will be screened for F.A.S.D. He is currently working with C.A.M.H.S. neurodevelopment service manager and clinical lead doctor to map out the assessment process and support options. The service manager has a meeting with a national F.A.S.D. charity to discuss local initiatives and how this service can increase support in this area. This is what happened with the C.A.M.H.S. doctors. On top of this through the inclusion team we have provided training for the staff. So the team provided training for the staff in Education who have children that are identified and from September there will be broader training for F.A.S.D. in schools. It will part of be a rolling programme with one of the trainings that will be provided.

[10:30]

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That is good. Does that include speech and language therapy, do you know, as a service? Because I think that is very helpful for people with ...

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I think we have the provision for speech and language therapy, it is coming in one package. I do not think it needs to be separated so you have an assessment and if identified it will be provided.

**Associate Director, Children's Health and Well-being:**

We have 2 additional speech and language therapists recruited as part of the neurodevelopmental pathway so we have them as part of that robust multi-disciplinary team that is going to be part of the assessment and treatment programme for all young people as well. So that will be in place.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

If somebody had concerns that their trial may be affected by this and it was not noticed as a baby or something, who would they go to see about that?

**Associate Director, Children's Health and Well-being:**

They would make a referral to the Children and Families Hub for the neurodevelopmental service and then they will be allocated to the relevant practitioner, likely Dr. Hagan at the moment as a paediatrician that is going to have responsibility for Foetal Alcohol Syndrome.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Thanks. Just one more question about that generally. Can you elaborate on any work that is being done within the community by midwives or early years support to raise awareness of F.A.S.D. and also to try and remove the stigma around mothers admitting to alcohol consumption while pregnant?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I think I need to pick up this with the Minister for Health and Social Services and I think it is a very good question. We have started to work more collaboratively with the Public Health, and the Minister for Health had a meeting with the Director of Public Health last week and definitely this is one of the various things that we will need to work together.

**Associate Director, Children's Health and Well-being:**

Yes, and I think we recognise that as a service there needs to be some promotion around the potential impact of alcohol during pregnancy as part of our work around foetal alcohol, but we are also realising as part of the pathway we are going to need to be sensitive about how this issue is handled because it is a potentially difficult and sensitive area to be exploring with families as well when young people are coming for diagnostic assessment. So it will be handled extremely carefully and sensitively when the conversations arise.



**Minister for Children and Education:**

There is something else we did not mention about C.A.M.H.S. but I would like to bring to public attention at a public hearing as well, that we have early intervention services that were set up in C.A.M.H.S. and a mental health practitioner assigned now to each cluster of schools providing consultation and support. Its wider teams also deliver group work in schools, and 2 staff took part in the kind of forecasting as well, so we have this early intervention. On top of this we are entering now into the consultation process with staff ahead of moving to open service from 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. 7 days a week, and we are working with Adult Mental Health that hopefully will recruit 3 C.A.M.H.S. nurses to operate an out of hours service between 8.00 p.m. to 8.00 a.m. so we would have 24 hours provision to support emergencies.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Minister, could you provide an update on the C.A.M.H.S. annual summary report because I think we were thinking it was going to be published in April?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I am not sure.

**Associate Director, Children's Health and Well-being:**

The 2022 report is complete. We have had some delays to publication because we are also due to publish an update on the mental health strategy and there has been some discussion whether both reports are amalgamated and shared in one go. But the report is ready so I can conclude that and make sure it progresses.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I would rather that it would be published; and thank you for raising this.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

My next question was about the plans to establish the new therapeutic care facility for looked after children, but you have mentioned already you are expecting this to be in place in 2024?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, 2024. So what is happening now, we have identified houses that we can purchase and we have money to purchase the houses, so we need to get some pre-planning understanding of if it will work or not. We also have options within the property folio but it can take longer so I would rather progress with the quicker option. It is there so hopefully some time in ... it depends how the planning application goes, because whatever we purchase we will need to do special adjustments.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

The next question is just one question about children's health in general. Minister, please could you confirm your involvement, if any, with the Government's work to provide free GP visits for children?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Okay, the Minister for Health and Social Services and the Minister for Social Security have been working together creating the scheme, with fully funded consultation for children 0 to 17. This work progressed well and the primary care body have been very supportive, and the Minister for Social Security is now finalising details around the agreement with general practice and hope to make an announcement very soon. My and my Assistant Minister's priority is that it was voted - and my vote is known; I was in full support. But because it will be delivered by the Health and Social Security working with the G.P.s I have not been involved. While my title says Minister for Children and Education my remit covers only C.A.M.H.S. connected to the Health, all others I am consultee and we are working together.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

It looks like it is going ahead quite well.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, it should be announced very, very shortly hopefully, yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That is great, thank you. Back to you now.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Yes, we are going back to exit interviews. I know we talked to you a lot about this but at the panel's last hearing we asked about progress with exit interviews for staff leaving sites and were advised that changes would come with the rollout of Connect People which is expected to capture themes and trends that the department can learn from. Please could you confirm whether that process and data capture has commenced?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I wish the Connect would work as everyone has expected. I am sure that you have heard yourself about Connect Finance that was not rolled out easy, so Connect People was delayed. This is really important because from my perspective we cannot continue with just Connect People. It would make our life easier but we need to have exit interviews. So if we are looking back in October we have only 16 per cent of people who are ready and gave their exit interviews in October. So the work that we have done, regardless Connect issues, because Connect People has not been

launched, we have already 33 per cent of the leavers. So we doubled now the numbers in exit interviews despite Connect People did not go forward. So the current process that all those leaving the Government are asked to complete a leaver survey exit interview and it is designed to give us feedback. I have more data than I had previously because we started to look into this process. I hope I will have more data when Connect People is live but I do not want to postpone it. By the way, what was really good to see, that in June the labour report details that C.Y.P.E.S. has 7.13 in total, we are talking about all C.Y.P.E.S., and it is the lowest turnover from any other department in the Government and lower than the average, which is really reassuring. It is lower than it was last year, so if we are comparing last year we have 8.22, this year we have 7.13 so we are really working hard on the retention. Twenty-three per cent of C.Y.P.E.S. leavers left indicating personal reasons, not work related; 24 employees, 13 per cent left indicated leaving Jersey; 26 employees which is 14 per cent left indicating career development in Jersey; 18 employees left indicating end of fixed term contract, parental leave, staff cover, project or short term arrangements; 19 employees which is 11 per cent indicated retirement; 10 employees, 5 per cent, indicated better pay or benefits, so only 5 per cent we have better pay and benefits; 6 employees, 3 per cent, left because of health reasons. All other factors indicated there were less than 5 people so we could not give the percentage, including unfortunate death in the service, failed probation result, formal action, not returning after parental leave, job dissatisfaction and health retirement. So there are various reasons. We are not there yet but we doubled our number on the exit interviews compared to October.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

What concerned us initially was that the Connect People is an internal management system and we were worried about its independence, that maybe an independent agency might be able to connect quickly and get these exit interviews. We were wondering if you had considered an independent agency, or the education system, or the whole of the civil service have not thought of an independent system external to our H.R. (human resources) department and completely separate to the States might be more applicable going forward.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Thank you for raising this, I think it is something that we must consider. For this period of time for the last 6 months I concentrated on how I can get more data and more exit interviews despite the situation, and I will take it up with H.R. and Corporate Services to raise it with them and to consider it being independent.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Can I just say that was a really high number of people leaving the Island, was it not? Quite a high amount. Is that the second largest percentage?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Twenty-four people, it is 13 per cent leavers left.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

It is back to a theme that I have had over the last 2 weeks - I know I keep going on about this - but as an Island community we have been very fortunate since the war to have immigration, but I think we are going the other way now.

**Group Director for Education:**

It was the third highest reason.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Our third highest; that is quite a few people then leaving Jersey.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Very concerning. Thank you very much. That is the basis of that exit interviews.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I think it is a really good idea to see how we can get independent ...

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

It might provoke those who do exit the system to perhaps be more honest and forthcoming. That was our thoughts. Now, the next questions are based around the Children's Commissioner. Minister, can you confirm whether you hold regular meetings with the Acting Children's Commissioner?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I have met the Acting Children's Commissioner twice in the past month and we maintain a mainly positive relationship. We are trying to work. I was disappointed this morning because this morning the annual report was published in *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* and I read it at 6.00 a.m. in the *J.E.P.* but we all received it at 7.55 a.m., 2 hours later, in our inboxes. But I think this is one of the ways that we need ... and I need to speak to them that it is important that when *J.E.P.* are under embargo, me as the Minister will be notified under embargo. But we are definitely working through and we have regular meetings and we will continue to have regular meetings. My chief officer meets with the Children's Commissioner regularly as well. What we are looking for from the Children's Commissioner and us; we are putting clarity about the processes in place. So for example I completely respect the independence of the Children's Commissioner and I agree that the Children's Commissioner will meet children in care when she would like to meet them. What we were missing

is that there is a process that should be followed because we have also best interests of the child, so if the Children's Commissioner would like to meet I would like to be notified, my officers needs to receive an email: "We would like to come and visit at this time." Officers can say: "4.00 p.m. is not comfortable; can you come at 6.00 p.m." or to have this clarity of communication. So it is not about ...

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

As you would if you were a parent for your own child.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, so we are working through the process and I think it does work well. I personally have been involved in 2 when the Children's Commissioner had concerns and I addressed the concerns with Children's Commissioner saw the children within 24 hours - even less, half a day - and through these specific examples we worked out how the process would go forward. There are lots of other things like we are working around the guidance around reciprocal agreements, about a vision for ... we discussed and we raised the right to play, for example, and I encouraged them to be involved because we have a play working group and we would welcome input from the Children's Commissioner. Also I raised with the Children's Commissioner in our recent conversation community schools that we will hopefully start to pilot in the coming year, or at least some of the project and the input, how community schools ...

[10:45]

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

We really do value the role of the Children's Commissioner. I have a meeting around ...

**Minister for Children and Education:**

We are trying to look how school can be more of a community hub, to put maybe more wraparound care. We are developing several pilots; we are now waiting to hear from schools who would like to be part of the pilots and ...

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

It is a whole Government initiative.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, and we will have much more detail in the next public hearing because we are working through the framework and the pilot.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

That is an excellent idea. We were just looking for an update with regards to the recruitment of the new Commissioner of Children and Young People. Has advertising for that role begun? What is the process and timeline expected for our new appointment?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

It is not in my remit. I know that the advertising should go imminently, at least I have been told by Corporate Services. I hope we will have ... because it is not easy for the Acting Children's Commissioner, we need some stability within the service and it would work for the benefit of all. So I personally am encouraging to go with the advertising ... we had a conversation recently and I have been told the advertising is coming out shortly for the recruitment.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Good. Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Chair.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

I have some questions about early years. In our public hearing in March reference was made to a report that Deputy Doublet was working on with the Best Start Partnership with regards to early years provision, so please could you provide the panel with an update on that one?

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

Sure, yes. So the first phase of that work is nearly complete and it is an evidence refresh, because the work that I want to do in early years, it is very important that it is evidence based and anything that we put in place to improve early years is going to have an impact and that we are spending the money in an effective way. I have shared the first phase ... I am in the process of sharing it with some of the stakeholders because I think it is important that people who are the experts locally in early years get first sight of that, and I would be happy to share that with the Scrutiny Panel before it is shared more widely as well.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That is great. Also at the last public hearing the breakdown of the additional £288,000 of funding to the Nursery Education Fund was discussed and it was detailed that each individual nursery could decide how the funding would be spent. Do you know how the nurseries have spent their additional funding? Do you have that information?

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

I think the nurseries, it is fair to say, are absorbing some considerable cost of living increases at the moment. Some of the things that they are telling us are to do with things like insurance, some of

the insurance has increased by 96 per cent, the costs there, and in food they are seeing an increase of around 25 per cent, cleaning between 45 and 63 per cent increase. So although I was very hopeful that the increased funding that we put in would be a big help it does seem like the cost of living pressures they are facing are really quite severe.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

It has been absorbed.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

I think so. Although some of the additional funding ... so there was also 2 per cent on top of the 8 per cent which will be recurring, and that 2 per cent was specifically for experiences that would improve the children's learning and development. So that will have gone on things like resources, and I can seek more information on that if you are interested.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes, just one last question about that then. Are you aware as to whether they have spent all the additional funding they received?

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

I would imagine they probably have, yes.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I think you have regularly meetings with J.E.Y.A. (Jersey Early Years Association).

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

Yes, I am meeting very regularly with J.E.Y.A. and I am increasing the frequency of those meetings, yes, so I can get you information about that.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

One has to ask the obvious question; did they have the correct insurance in place before, or have they just got the correct insurance now and that is why it has doubled?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

The insurance has really gone high.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That is a big change.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

It is a big change and it is a big impact on their private businesses and private business when you have these increases it is ...

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Is considerable.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Because the quality of the childcare is also ...

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

That is our primary concern, is it not, the quality?

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

The next question is about the recovery report, the *Post COVID-19 Recovery Report*. On 26th May the *Jersey Education Recovery Report* was published, noting the continuing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on education and the policy actions implemented to mitigate these. Minister, could you provide us with some of the learnings that have been taken from the recovery policies put in place after the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Sure. So pupils in all 34 Government of Jersey non-fee paying and fee paying schools have been supported. A 20,227 hours of additional much needed one to one tuition has been provided to Jersey children. As a result the test data was used to measure the impact and all groups have made progress despite the challenges of COVID. So the reading recovery programme delivered training now for 5 teachers. We realised that we need to have specialist teachers that train for these specific recovery programmes. We have seen the jump; within 4 months they catch up for a year. It was different obviously from school to school, we had it in maths, we had it in reading, we had it in writing. So not only provided the jump, now in Jersey we have 13 reading specialist teachers, even though the funding might reduce, we will still retain the specialist teachers that would be continuing to work with the children that are not achieving expected levels. So the stats in reading have been also bolstered by the reading influence project assessed by over 100 pupils in 16 Government schools, which supported pupils making significant gains in their reading accuracy and comprehension. Also we used art. We had the art project because the art can bring development in all areas and some children through connection to art develop other skills and connecting back to school and learning.



More students could articulate their feelings, understanding the problem, worries, work collaboratively and engage in the learning process. So art opened the door for proper engagement with learning. Now, funding moving forward I think probably would be something that ...

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

That is my question, yes.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

... you are interested in. The Social Recovery Budget ends in December 2023 and there is no current allocation within the wider Government. However, individual projects that we were funded from this budget have been carefully evaluated and what worked the best we will move and fund it from our C.Y.P.E.S. budget. They will need to make efficiencies, well let us make efficiencies and we can see that some project work really, really well, we have good results and it can replace old type of learning, and we have now trained teachers who can deliver this project. We also sustain our inclusion budget going forward and the inclusion budget is about making sure that children are able to continue to study in the mainstream. We can look around education, reform programme, budget we will use from the learning during the recovery programme going forward. To become business as usual and not to have just under COVID recovery.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

So it is not going to be phased out, it is just ongoing?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Whatever worked well and whatever the needs are. We know that some projects work well around the reading, around the writing, around the maths and the arts. I am putting an extra bit to arts into the Government Plan because the arts we are missing so this will go forward all from existing Education Reform budget or from extra that we are putting into the Government Plan. But I am sure that we will have a discussion about the Government Plan later on.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Basically I think you have answered the next question. I was very impressed with the *Education Recovery Report* and the figures within, so congratulations.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, impressive, yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

All right, I have some questions now on the Children, Young People, Education and Skills capital plans.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Okay.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Last October you advised the panel in the quarterly hearing that you hoped to make a public announcement about the plans for the replacement of Rouge Bouillon School by early 2023. So please can you provide an update on the school?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I wish I could.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I wish I could. We worked really, really hard. There are difficulties, not because we do not have a site, we have a site probably and we know that the school needs to be somewhere between Rouge Bouillon and Castle Quay. Now, the whole enquiry around the waterfront area that now development is going, depends how the blue services ... we have some options to the blue services. What we have done, we have put lots of maintenance and support into the Rouge Bouillon School. It depends, if we will have a clean site for blue light services it means that we will do it very quickly. Another option is to have a location in between. The options are on the table. I am pushing very hard to start with it but it is within that area. I hope in September/October when the enquiry around the waterfront will come back and there will be more clarity around the whole of that area we can ...

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

There is a big site at Overdale ...

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I wish. So I know that Rouge Bouillon probably will say: "Where is the Rouge Bouillon?" The intention is clear that Rouge Bouillon needs to be redeveloped at the Rouge Bouillon but we cannot plan redevelopment until we know which side will go to blue light.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

So maybe around September time you will see then where the blue light services will go.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay, so then I have got a question which is focused on the new school and educational development's head of expenditure. So this included the development of plans for the primary schools in St. Helier. Please can you provide an update on the various feasibility work underway as part of that head of expenditure?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Absolutely. The work is progressing and I hope within the next week or 2 the St. Helier Deputies first and after the wider States Members would receive an invitation for the full briefing and presentations of the initial plans. I tried to make it before end of June but because of several things ... but I hope within the next 2 or 3 weeks you will get an invitation and it will be presented, and to get your feedback. Also my officers are putting together an engagement plan and it will be hopefully in August, September, October with the community. We are looking into the competition. I cannot disclose the details but we really would like to involve local architects and also young people who are looking at design and technology and to bring in their ideas and contribute to ... because it will be a community school, it will work with the community. So we are working with the association of architects to develop the details of how we can incorporate new visions. So it is all progressing and hopefully it is all in line in January so we can put a planning application forward. Let us say the first quarter, because we know how it is at work, the first quarter 2024 hopefully I will have a planning application.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

I am particularly thrilled about involving local architects because I am afraid the failing of our States over the last decade or so has been to always farm out architectural works to the mainland and large ...

**Minister for Children and Education:**

No, they are working together with my team to develop options. They are working collaboratively.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

So I just have a sort of more detailed question about how the heads of expenditure work. As a project it is developed, it is moved out of this head of expenditure, so will there be other projects ongoing under this as well?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, so do you remember that when it will go into the Government Plan, what we had, we have incorporated several projects under a wider head of expenditure, and one of the reasons is

commercial reasons. We are saying that we are going to spend this amount of money so that people know but we are happy to share details with Scrutiny on a confidential basis the breakdown of each one. I have the breakdown up 100,000 or 50,000 projects, so as small as that, and millions of pounds projects, but it is all going under 3 different heads of expenditure; major maintenance and others.

[11:00]

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Now I have some questions about school meals.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Okay, just to let ... before we move on I think it is important to tell you that Mont à l'Alabbé inspection programme's completion date is December 2023 and it is on track. Also we are going forward with the shading investment and the schools that we will start with the shading is St. Clement, Rouge Bouillon, Les Landes, St. Lawrence, Grouville, First Tower and Grand Vaux. This is the schools that first ...

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

I know first-hand after standing on the Grouville sports field for sports day.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

And ventilation and cooling at Les Quennevais phase 3 to commence on 17th July.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Right, okay, because maybe we will have a very hot autumn or something.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Let us see how it is going.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

It seems to be getting hotter.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, school meals?

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

So on the subject of the school meals I am just looking at this, could you provide us with an update as to whether the rollout plan is on schedule which was for a further 3 schools in September?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Absolutely, yes. It is on schedule, it will be delivered, and actually we are working through other options and if the options work out we will do other schools. But really where we are concentrating now is work underway in phase 2 and 3 schools, the building work. So the thing that we need to speed up is the building work. But as promised in March, the 3 schools, Springfield, Grand Vaux and Plat Douet will have hot meals available from September and we are looking at anything else we can do, but it is currently commercially sensitive so we will see.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay. How many staff need to be recruited and trained for the extension of the scheme in September and how many are anticipated in the following year?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I need to get the numbers, I do not know exactly the numbers. I am happy to provide it. I have had a conversation with an officer who is responsible and been updated that they are okay for recruitment for that. So I do not know the numbers exactly because each school has different options. This school was offered different options, but we will provide the numbers.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Which schools need the biggest facilities upgrade to deliver school meals?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I think it is very difficult to compare. I mean, I have a couple of schools in my head but ...

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

It would not be Grouville, Minister, because we are perfect in every way.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

No, it would not be Grouville. What is happening, it is not just about the facilities, it is about what major work needs to be done and move things around. Because they are all so different the numbers they cannot work the same, yes.

**Group Director for Education:**

If it is helpful, for our primary school estate in a sense there is no upgrade, they are all starting from a standing point of having no kitchens or serveries at inception so, as the Minister says, it is the

complexity of is it as simple as there is a really good sized P.E. (physical education) cupboard in the hall that can be converted or is it building out extensions. That is the range that the team have been looking at school by school.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

As I am going from school to school, each school had completely different solutions and also they have 2 options and they need to work out what is the option and each option will drive us to different cost and different complexity. For example, if we are thinking about one particular school in my mind, to create a servery it will be maybe an opportunity to extend the hall then at the same. So it is not just about the servery, it is about having entrance, exit, move around, disabled toilet and extending halls at the same time. So the project is getting much bigger and obviously planning application getting more involved.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

On that basis will you be seeking further funding in the upcoming Government Plan?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

We are fine for funding now. We are carefully managing budgets.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay. Now, I just have a question which is about the impact of the cost of living crisis on children. This is based on quite an interesting survey from the Childhood Trust in June 2022 which showed that mental health problems are being linked to children being concerned by the cost of living crisis with one-third of the 608 parents questioned saying their under-18s had been worried about the crisis. So is there any work being done in Jersey to study and support the impact that the cost of living crisis is having on young people, and that would be cross-ministerial and so-on?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, I mean, as a Minister I do not think any Council of Ministers meeting happens without discussing the cost of living crisis, and we all know the housing is contributing to the cost of living crisis, food is contributing, the fuel, there are lots of components including children's care. From our perspective we are thinking about how we can support families to ease it. The £42 million budget that was directed to the families, to the purse of the families, hopefully eased it a bit. On my perspective, this is the conversations that go on from school, we have emotional mental health support, we have counsellors, so if the children have some concerns or come disturbed to school it will be picked up by school and it will be a conversation and it will be communicating with the parents. What we started to look at and discuss, if we have practitioners - we talked about this - within schools as we

are developing the community schools approach, if you have a family worker at school or one family worker shared between 2 schools this is where parents during the handover can share.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

Also, the Jersey Youth Parliament when they presented to us their request for an improved P.S.H.E. (Personal, Social, Health Education) curriculum, money management and understanding of finances was one of the areas that they requested, and that work is underway. There is a draft document which we could share with you at some point in confidence. It is not ready for publication yet but that is going to be part of the P.S.H.E. curriculum so that should go some way towards helping children to learn some of those skills around money management.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

We had feedback yesterday from our drop-in in St. Helier about that. Would that be included in the P.S.H.E. because children seem to be leaving school with very little background in money management and banking and projections and so on? So that would be very valuable.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That is good about the schools but just to confirm, in ministerial meetings this subject is raised, not just about the cost of living generally but the impact on young people and mental health?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

It is, as far as the general impact on mental health within the young people and adults because we can see complexity also, and for me I would like to see less separation because we can stabilise a young person - the person we can address, like I said, at school - but if the parent has not been supported then parents are still in difficulty and some experience mental health problems and the parent cannot support this child. This is why our department started to work collaboratively and looking at children and families coming together; we need to support both at the same time to make sure that the young person has a place to come back and be able to continue together.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

Further down the line I think the community schools will help with that as well because that will be about providing more support around the family.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Also the provision of school meals will go some way to providing support.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Absolutely.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

It could not be better timed. My next question is about youth facilities. Minister, could you provide an update as to where the north of St. Helier youth club may be established?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I really, really want to establish it as soon as possible. I think I could not make it clearer even in my other hat as a Deputy of St. Helier. The Constable rightly challenges back and asks do we have pre-planning consultation about Nelson Place and this is what we are doing to get the full pre-planning to go back to the Constable.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

The old fire station in Nelson Place?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

The old fire station in Nelson Place. This is one option. There are 2 other options raised with me and I do not want to name names but my officers are now looking ... with pre-planning coming now we do not want to stop. There are 2 other places within St. Helier I am happy to share privately off the record, and one more option that we are looking if ... when we are developing Gas Place or for east of town school, if within that premises we can incorporate a youth service. I know there is already lots of pressure towards that building and architects are working, based on what we have seen in London in the middle of the city, on how we can have smart design and smart use of the places. I cannot emphasise how this youth centre in the centre of town is important. We know where we have difficulties, we know children need to have a place where they can hang out and do things and to have this ... youth workers, they are doing amazing work, the connection with the children and support of the young people is incredible. I am trying to work together with the town Deputies on that, open and full co-operation and any ideas and support will be welcome.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Walk-in facilities especially which are close to the major areas.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I think that one of the places that we do have, and maybe it is not advertised enough and we need to advertise more, it is a walk-in café at the Liberty Station and the children and young people can walk in, walk out, there is always late activities, there is lots of spaces and it is a drop-in. Children and young people from anywhere in the Island can come to that place, so even though it is based in St. Helier we have La Rocque children coming in and Les Quennevais children coming in.



**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That is really good but the younger teenagers, maybe some of them need something a bit closer to home.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Absolutely. No, it is not a replacement, it is 100 per cent that we need a proper youth centre in town.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

The next part of that question relates to Fort Regent. The gradual closure of sports clubs and club facilities at Fort Regent. Do you have any concerns that children and young adults will have reduced options of where to go with regards to this?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Thank you for your question, and I think it is important to raise. Fort Regent is really close to my heart. I like Fort Regent, my daughter trained in Fort Regent, I think that Fort Regent has an emotional connection on top of the delivery in services. I work closely with Deputy Stephenson because she is responsible for sport and play, so we work very close between our department and her office to make sure that the provision is there. We are working more with Jersey Sports that can provide more as well because from a health perspective the level of obesity that we have on the Island is high, we know this, and we know that being active in sport is important. So I also have concerns but it is not just about the provision, it is about the cost, it is about how we are making sure it is available for everyone. This is part of the community schools development, if we can extend time and we have sport facilities, multisport clubs free of charge and doing different things on the site it will help.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Moving on to the Skills Fund, Minister.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Okay.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Please can you tell us more about the proposed Jersey Skills Fund and the work underway to get it launched by January 2024?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Thank you for your question. I will provide more in the next public hearing because the first draft proposal has been completed now and reviewed by senior leadership team. I am a member of the

Population and Skills Ministerial Group and it should be presented to the Population and Skills Ministerial Group on the next ... in the one after next because I would like to be there and I am not sure that I will there, it depends on my health. What we have concentrated around the skills, we work a lot around the apprenticeships and the extension provision between 16 to 19, so this work has progressed and we are now shortly ... how it will work and it is moving us closely to provision of education up to 18. If you remember we have it in the actionable agenda that we would like to see education extended to 18. Apprenticeship schemes, we know we need people who are trained and we need to work with the businesses and we are working hard to make it available and affordable for everyone.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Will it include other age groups, older age groups, do you think?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, I mean, there will be separation between 16 and 19 and 19 plus because it is 2 different groups, yes. On top of this we worked and developed a joint programme, not in education and employment, what we call N.E.E.T. (Not in Education Employment Training). We had really successful projects run by Skills and run by Highlands. Now we have combined these projects and we are putting in sustainable funds because it was funded from the social recovery and we saw the really good outcomes.

[11:15]

We are talking about like 90 per cent after this course young people were employed or continued with their education when before they were not engaged with the system. So this investment is important and it has the full support of the Council of Ministers.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

We had some very positive feedback from our drop-in in St. Helier yesterday about Highlands and the skills training that is offered there. I think that is all on that particular subject. We are going to move on now to higher education. Minister, you signed the Education (Grants and Allowances) (Amendment No. 4) last week. We have had some correspondence and questions from members of the public about this and have adapted some of these areas of interest into our following questions. We understand that the classification used for the new London component is different to the classifications used by the U.K. and in some cases is different to what universities are advising prospective students regarding their local classification. The Jersey Student Loan Support Group has raised this with us as a concern that it might cause confusion for some students. Please can you confirm the reason for taking such a different approach?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I need to look into details and the comparison. From my understand we used the postcode of the university within the London area ... I mean, the universities classified as London universities, they will get London component. So we have had a very straightforward approach; if the university is not in London the university is not in London, but we can look into this.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

I think there is an element of confusion and it is just a matter that clarity be required going forward about student finance in that particular area. So thank you. I may be compromised on the next question, so we are on question 31. Please could you clarify how the new order has changed consideration of the students' relevant assets or income, the new scheme that you have introduced?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

We kept the same thresholds as previously. The difference between previous order and this order that we introduced sliding scale, which I felt that it is fairer. For example the situation where we had previously if somebody owned £2 more and gone through a different group at the threshold could receive £1,000 plus less just because they cross over in their income by £1. What was introduced is the sliding scale that the people who are starting to earn more - and we know that some people start to earn more - will not be disadvantaged if they cross the line. But the thresholds remain as they are, up to £200, and for the fees it depends on the scale, and up to £99,000 for the maintenance. We have now shared with Scrutiny our plans, that we are going towards phase 3 where we are going to review more. We will review the thresholds, we will review the assets, there is much wider review. First of all the increase that I put in applies, the age discrimination that was taken out, the London component, sliding scales as we discussed and promised to the group in September, our first meeting, has been delivered.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Could you clarify details about the reasons for including the new exception to non-eligibility criteria for certain courses, as per article 8(a), and advise what the criteria is for inclusion on the list of applicable courses?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

We need to go probably through all courses to go into the details. We have courses that we have skills shortage and some courses who are on our skills shortage would require ... the different courses are subsidised in different ways, and we have mental health, we have doctors, and we have ... the list of the shortage and this is why we are supporting. It is supported in different ways; some of them receive extra, some of them receive bursaries. It needs to be flexible and it needs to be

built according to the need on the Island. I know we cannot cover all of them. It is always coming to me: "But we are doing this, why are we not included?" The work that we are doing now, and it is work together with the Economic Development Department and around the Council of Ministers to define ... because at the end of the day it is public money and if extra public money is spent we need to make sure that the public also ...

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

We have to justify it, yes.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, get a benefit coming back and there is different options how we might continue going forward to support specific courses, because of the needs of the Island.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

It is that season, is it not? It is loan season. When can a student expect to receive their grant letters and what are the payment dates for higher education grants this academic year?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

It depends. There was a slight delay in sending notification letters due to the system being updated with new rates. Now the new order is signed, the new order coming into place this Friday, most of the forms are processed and all telephone calls have been answered. So I assume ... what I would ask my team is to put a public announcement that all the public will be aware of and we will have proper communication with the press release to clarify all dates and other information that the public might require.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

It is just there has been quite a lot of feedback about the lack of those letters.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I can see if I am going through, we have H.E.1 (Higher Education 1) form application, it does not take longer than 10 days, we have 560 in approved, currently 26 to be processed, 22 waiting for enquiries to come back. The new form we had some glitches at the start but I understand the H.E.2 form is better, we have 639 received, 369 processed, 121 to process with incomplete information, so only 8 was not looked at. From my understanding all phone calls have been answered straight away and 100 per cent calls were answered - if somebody has different information I would like to know - 33 emails received and they are answered within 48 hours. Thank you for raising it with me. If there are lots of questions because of the order being signed and the changes, I would ask to have press release sent to the media and communicate it through all channels, including probably

the links that people can seek more information because obviously we can only put limited information, but the dates would need to be published.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

We did have another concern about the Google translate system. It was not currently operating European Portuguese as a language option. Can you confirm whether the accessibility of that information will be provided by student finance?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I will need to get back to you on that. Thank you for raising this important point.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Can you confirm what timeline you will take for any changes that might be forthcoming for higher education funding for 2024?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Starting in 2024?

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Yes.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

So, as we discussed previously, we announced everything that will happen in 2023 and we are working in December and January, as I did this year ... January 2024 we will announce changes for September 2024.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

You will go to public consultation about those?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

It depends what we are proposing because some stuff I am required to go ... if I am going to do major changes it might take longer. If it will operate similar to what we have this year - like to uplift London component, uplift pay, get extra courses - I think we will have consultation with the stakeholders but for any major change which requires also a change in the law ... because we have the law, any major changes that require a law change we must go into the consultation.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Thank you, Minister.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

I was asked by a member of the public about an extra question, just a quick question on this subject, this morning. I have not got it written down so I hope I get my facts right. The cut off for grant support for distance learning degrees is, I think, £65,000 and for U.K. universities it is about £200,000 or so. So it seems like someone wanting to study a degree in the distance learning way is not ...

**Minister for Children and Education:**

They have different subsidy.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes, is not having the same opportunity. I imagine that will grow and become more.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

This is something that came to my attention from 2 different perspectives. There are some people who are not able to go off Island, for medical or other reasons, and we need to have this discussion. It was just brought recently to my attention. I do not have provision within the law, I do not even have discretion to myself. Within the law it is very clear that if you do distance learning you are receiving a specific lower ... because when the law was introduced it was clear if somebody was distance learning they are not necessarily doing it full time and they are able to work. But we now know there is different complexities as we are going forward and this will be looked at.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

There may also be perhaps couples in a household who need to retrain so this could make it difficult for them to get any financial support to do a distance learning degree. I just thought I would raise that.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Currently we do not have a provision even for my discretion in the law to support fully 100 per cent distance learning.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

It is just coming up to 11.30 a.m., we have a few more questions, are we able to carry on?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

If really quickly because I do need to go off the Island today.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay, so I will bring up the next one and then maybe the others could be written.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, sure.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay, so just a couple of questions about postgraduate support. We are aware that the deadline for the Jersey bursary for postgraduate support was 1st May. Could you provide us with some information as to how many applications were received this year?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

I do not know how many applications we received but the bursary process is going on on 12th and 13th July, but I will check how many applications were received this year because it is not really administrated through us.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay. So could you provide us with some detail as to how many bursaries for postgraduate courses are provided per year?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, the funding provided will range from £1,000 to £10,000 per student per year. Students can be on course lengths between one and 4 years. In 2018 to 2019 total applicants were 26, total funded was 10, total funding £73,000. In 2022 to 2023, so if I jump quickly, we had 40 applicants, 17 were funded and we spent £131,000 for the postgraduates. I can send the whole range from all these years.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

The only other question on that is can you release the subject areas of those granted bursaries?

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, absolutely, and it is actually 2 A4 pages, cultural studies, photography, software engineering, applied ecology, Islamic studies and history, sociology, articles of sports, marine biology, chemical reports, speech and language composition, global health science, human rights law, music composition, mechanical engineering. So it is really broad. I am happy to leave these 2 pages for your consideration.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

That is great. Very diverse. Good.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes, thank you. So if we ask our other questions as written ones. One was on joint working with Justice and Home Affairs about prison and so on, one was on the Jersey school curriculum and ...

**Minister for Children and Education:**

We had a joint meeting with the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs last week because we were going through our joint work and also ...

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

We did a workshop. It was really good.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

We did a workshop with them.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay, thank you.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Thank you.

**Minister for Children and Education:**

Thank you.

[11:30]