



JERSEY CHILD CARE TRUST

The Bridge, Le Geyt Road, St Saviour, Jersey JE2 7NT

Telephone: 01534 629901

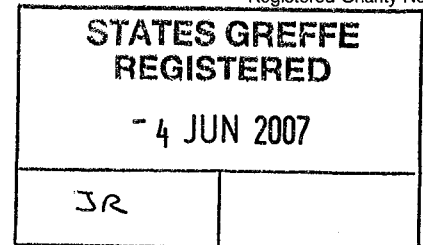
Facsimile: 01534 629902

E-mail: info@jcct.org.je

Website: www.jcct.org.je

Registered Charity No. 241

Tim Oldham
Lead Officer
Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel
Morier House
Halkett Place
St. Helier
JE1 1DD



1st June 2007

Dear Mr. Oldham,

Re: Childcare and Early Years Education

I sent with my letter of the 15th May a copy of the submission made by the Jersey Child Care Trust (Trust) to the Council of Ministers.

In addition to that paper on the overall policy towards childcare and early years education, the Scrutiny Panel might find of interest information on the work of the Trust, and some operational issues that the Trust would wish to flag up arising from the its day to day activities. With this in mind, please find attached a general note on the activities of the Trust, which is accompanied by:

1. The Trust's Constitution;
2. The Trust's latest Annual Report and Accounts;
3. Special Needs Inclusion Project;
4. Supported Places Project;
5. Nanny Accreditation Scheme.

Representatives of the Trust would be very happy to answer questions or provide additional information if the Scrutiny Panel should wish this.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Powell CBE
Chairman

Submission by the Jersey Child Care Trust to the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel in connection with the review of what is required for the effective delivery of childcare and early years education

Introduction

The Child Care Trust was set up by the States in 1997 with a remit to coordinate, promote and facilitate the expansion of high quality and affordable childcare provision in the Island.

The Constitution of the Trust, which is attached as Appendix 1, can only be changed with the approval of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture and with the approval of the Royal Court of Jersey.

The objectives of the Trust are set out in the Constitution.

A copy of the Trust's latest report and accounts is attached as Appendix 2. These accounts have been approved by the Minister for Education but have yet to be presented to the States as is required by the Constitution.

The Trust believes it continues to have a very valuable independent role to perform acting as a bridge between the public and private sectors in securing its remit. The Trust provides services that it believes would otherwise have to be provided by the Ministry, and considers that in doing so it provides the services more cost effectively (i.e. at less cost to the public purse). The Trust also believes that it provides a valuable service for the benefit of both childcare providers and child care customers.

Childcare in Figures

0 – 4 years inclusive

- Total number of children in this age group = 3801 (Source: Education, Sport & Culture)
- Number of Registered Childcare Places for Early Years Care = 1070 places
- Number of States Nursery Class Places = 480

5 – 11 years inclusive

- Total number of children in this age group = 7125 (2001 census figures)
- Number of Registered Childcare Places for School Aged Care = 607 places
- 2006 average early years childcare costs £4.53 per hour
- 2006 average school aged care costs £2.89 per hour

Affordability

The childcare facilities provided by both the public and private sectors are of a high standard. However the free service provided by the public sector does not meet total need and many rely upon the childcare service made available by private providers. The difficulties created by this division between a free public service and a paid for private service have been referred to in the submission of the Jersey Child Care Trust to the Council of Ministers, a copy of which has been sent to the Scrutiny Panel. What the Trust would wish to emphasise is that in its view childcare should be affordable to all, and there is a need to recognise the difficulties facing those on relatively low

incomes in accessing child care when they are unable to obtain a place at a free public sector nursery.

In addition to making representations to the Council of Ministers on the general issue the Trust has made representations to the Minister of Social Security concerning the need to ensure that the proposed Income Support Scheme adequately provides for those on low incomes seeking childcare. In the absence of details of how the scheme will operate, it is difficult to say whether those enjoying financial support at the present time will be as well provided for in the future. What is clear is that the Social Security's figure of £3.42 per hour quoted in the "Income Support System" lodged au Greffe on 26th April 2005 will need to be amended to the more up to date figure quoted above.

The Trust is aware of the limited number of parents now able to access the current Child Care Allowance system (about 44 parents giving a 4.1% uptake) compared to the more successful School Aged Discount Scheme (about 460 parents giving a 75.8% uptake).

Parents cannot access the Child Care Allowance until they have been resident for 6 months. There are examples where children have had to be split from their parents for 6 months. For example, a family arriving to Jersey to work may choose to leave their children with grandparents or other carers for the first six months because of financial hardship, until they are entitled to Child Care Allowance. The School Aged Discount Scheme does not have a 6-month residency rule and it is considered important that the proposed Income Support Scheme maintains this situation.

Frontline staff should be able to exercise 'flexibility' to ensure they are able to consider the individual circumstances, which parents sometimes present to the Department of Education, Sport & Culture.

Providers have commented that the parents and themselves previously benefited from a specific contact person who could deal with issues. Since moving to the Family Zone, an area in the Social Security Department which will assist with any family or child benefit enquiry, they have felt this communication has been lost and they give several accounts of very frustrating communications.

The Trust supports the proposal to allow training/studying parents to access the Income Support System. Again, flexibility would benefit individual circumstances. An example is of the parent whose dyslexia was identified when she was 24 years of age and therefore had not been able to achieve any qualifications before this point. The School Aged Discount Scheme is currently considering her application for support in her final year of a degree course at Highlands College.

General activities of the Trust

The Trust continues to strive generally to make a difference to the quality, accessibility and affordability of childcare provision in Jersey. In 2006, these activities included:

- Quality Grants to childcare providers totalling £19,967 which contributed towards 110 extra childcare places.
- A Special Needs Inclusion Project which facilitated 2406 hours of support to 14 children to enable them to access mainstream early years childcare through one to one support workers. The Project currently has four further children who have been referred being held by the JCCT until further funds become available to provide support for them. The Trust has obtained private financial support for the project, however the demand has increased significantly in the past few months and the project could benefit greatly from further funding. Please refer to the attached appendix 3.
- Support for 9 part-time nursery places for children starting school. These children were unable to access a free nursery place and were referred by a professional for a social and/or developmental reason. There are strict criteria to be met to receive these places. Please refer to attached appendix 4. The project ensures that they have received some early education and care before commencing formal schooling in September. This intervention can offer improvements in all aspects of the child's development prior to them starting school.
- Provision of Continuous Professional Development courses for childcare staff.
- Administration of the School Age Discount Scheme on behalf of the Social Security Department.
- Provision of an Information Service for parents and providers of childcare. The Trust received an average of 250 enquiries per month by telephone, email or in person.
- Compilation of a list of 54 Approved Babysitters who are police checked and referenced to assist parents with a flexible form of childcare in a child's own home.
- Assistance to the sector on the retention of existing qualified staff through support for J-Category housing applications.
- The 24 private Foundation Stage Settings in Jersey are offered training and support by the Foundation Stage Teacher contracted to the Trust from the Department of Education, Sport & Culture.
- The Nanny Accreditation Scheme which professionally recognise Nannies meeting a strict quality criteria. Please refer to attached appendix 5. It is planned that Parents employing an Accredited Nanny will be able to access the same tax breaks as other parents accessing registered childcare. Employing a nanny can provide a flexible and cost effective form of childcare, particularly if you have more than one child or consider sharing a nanny with another family
- The Trust has worked with the NSPCC Pathways Project both at strategic and operational level to help its successful development. During 2006, the Executive Director took on the role as Chair for the Project's strategic board meetings.

In addition to foregoing, the Trust continues to raise the status of issues surrounding childcare. The Trust made representations to the Council of Ministers on the importance of Early Years Childcare for the achievements of a number of objectives in the States Strategic Plan. The Ministers' acceptance of this view was reflected in the Strategic Plan document presented to and adopted by the States in which it is stated 'we recognise that all forms of investment in the Island's children from the earliest years are an important and necessary investment in the Island's future'. With the proposed changes to the Income Support System and the introduction of GST imminent, the Trust has been part of several consultation exercises along with the Jersey Early Years Association and the Jersey Association of Child Carers to ensure the impact of such changes on parents using childcare is recognised and responded to appropriately.

The Trust has developed and maintained links with key strategic partners and service providers to support the implementation of the work of the Trust. In 2007, the Trust is continuing the projects detailed above. The Strategic case for good quality, affordable, childcare on an Island wide basis has been made in the submission to the Council of Ministers.

In addition, the Trust plans to give particular emphasis through a variety of projects to encourage employers to engage in family friendly employment practices. It is a firmly held view of the Trust that there is a continuing and urgent need to address issues impacting on the ability to provide adequate high quality and affordable childcare on the Island. There is a need for public/private sector partnership in childcare provision and for equality of treatment of parents and children according to their needs.

Current Issues

In the light of this, we would like to raise the following current issues.

The Trust has an obligation to support and monitor the availability of suitably qualified practitioners to fulfil the requirements of the private sector. In recent months, it has become evident that some nurseries are having difficulty finding appropriately qualified staff to meet their registration requirements under Day Care of Children (Jersey) Law 2002. There may be a number of reasons for this. Staff may be lost to the States sector due to more attractive pay and conditions, i.e. hours fitting in with family life. There is constant fluctuation in the market also due to demographics, i.e. people moving to and from the Island, meaning the Managers are constantly having to adjust staffing levels to meet their needs.

The Trust is concerned that there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that unlawful childcare practices are taking place around the Island. This may be for a variety of reasons, but it can be assumed that the cost of and/or the lack of accessibility of registered childcare are major factors. Also, the hours of care available may not meet the parent's needs.

The Trust in its submission to the Council of Ministers has commented separately on and is supportive of the proposal that all 3 and 4 year olds should be provided with 20 hours of free early years education per week for 38 weeks a year, and has pressed for more financial support in 2008 to enable child care to be available to all who need it.

The Trust would like to propose that the panel also take an independent look at the current registration procedure to which all private providers partake in initially when they open and as a subsequent annual re-registration. There are presently different requirements for public and private providers (e.g. ratio of staff to children and first aid training). The Trust sees it as vital that the current procedure is evaluated to ensure Scrutiny is clear about what is currently required in order to then evaluate any proposal by Education, Sport & Culture for additional checks for the quality requirements of the early years education being offered by private providers in respect of the proposed financial support referred to above.

The Trust would also like to draw the Panel's attention to issues regarding the Supported Places Scheme. The Trust works closely with Education in the first instance to place a child in a States nursery if possible. However, there are a number of children on the Island who start formal schooling without having prior access to early education and care. There are a number of reasons why this could be so. Whilst we acknowledge that parents may choose not to send their child, some do not have a choice because of financial constraints or the childcare simply does not meet the needs of the working parent. There are a number of commonalities in case studies that are becoming apparent since the Schemes conception.

Representatives of the Trust would be very pleased to appear before the Scrutiny Panel to answer questions or to discuss these matters further. Please find enclosed the Jersey Child Care Trust's Constitution and latest Annual Report and Accounts for your information.

Enclosed documentation:

- 1: The Trust's Constitution
- 2: The Trust's Annual Report and Accounts for 2006
- 3: Special Needs Inclusion Project
- 4: Supported Places Project
- 5: Nanny Accreditation Scheme