

STATES OF JERSEY



EARLY YEARS PLAN

**Presented to the States on 30th October 2024
by the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning**

STATES GREFFE

REPORT

The Common Strategic Policy 2024 to 2026 (CSP) was approved by the States Assembly in May 2024. Within it is a commitment to extend nursery and childcare provision. Specifically, it set out the following:

Children

Extend nursery and childcare provision

Children's needs, and the demands placed on families, have become increasingly complex in Jersey, exacerbated by the high cost-of-living and fewer nursery spaces being available.

Any increase in an offer to parents must be aligned with an increase in nursery and childcare spaces, so we must do this in a coordinated way. While the intention is to move towards a universal offer for 2 to 3-year-olds, we will start by extending nursery and childcare provision to children aged 2 to 3 years with additional needs. To help increase nursery spaces, we will pilot ways to access unused spaces in our primary school nurseries, and we will review the availability of spaces in St Helier - where the demand is highest - and also across the Island.

We will work with the sector to improve recruitment and retention, and to incentivise training and development for this critical profession. Improving our childcare provision will positively impact lifelong outcomes for our children and will also benefit the economy by enabling parents to return to work.

The primary purpose of this report is to set out the plans to implement CSP commitments. It will also reference other relevant activity in the early years sector to provide relevant context for these commitments. Approaches will be broken down to reflect plans to deliver:

1. More nursery spaces
2. Workforce support
3. New early years policy
4. Review availability of spaces in St Helier

Why?

It is important to remember why this CSP has been proposed and approved.

- The investment is primarily in the increased capacity and quality provision of *early childhood education and care*, recognising the transformative, positive effects on young children.

Secondary benefits are also likely to accrue including:

- Increased access and choice for families as nursery spaces increase.
- A strengthened proposition for Jersey to attract and retain working families.
- Greater utilisation of capacity in school workforce and/or premises.

Jersey already has high levels of participation in work, consequently, additional benefits from this investment are potentially in enabling a better balance of access to work by gender, an increase in hours of work and more choice on type of work undertaken.

Impact assessment

It is helpful to consider the impact of the CSP through the aspects of accessibility, affordability, choice, quality.

Aspects	Impact	Description
Accessibility	+	Access can mean several things e.g. proximity to need (i.e. near work or home, accessible to those with no transport). It can also reflect provisions that can support young children with additional needs. More settings and spaces and a priority on increasing provisions for children with additional needs will improve access.
Affordability	+	Increased Government funding will make childcare more affordable over time. Initially, impact will be felt by families of children with additional needs. If a roll out to universal funded support is delivered this will improve affordability for all families with 2-3-year-old children.
Choice	+	An increase in capacity i.e. more nursery spaces, will improve choice. It is also intended to create greater parity between providers so genuine choice is delivered.
Quality	+	Delivering investment in whole sector CPD, workforce recruitment and retention and evolving and strengthening systems for oversight and accountability will have positive impacts on quality.

1. Approach – increase nursery spaces

To implement the commitments set out in the CSP a series of pilots will be implemented in 2024/2025. These pilots will achieve two things:

- They will deliver additional nursery spaces for children
- They will inform the development of future early years policy and implementation plans

Pilots

The first phase of pilots, starting in Q4 2024, is taking place across three schools and tests three different models. Further pilots will be considered during the duration of the CSP.

- a) Extending provision in school nurseries.

It has been established, at many schools, that families benefit from extended school days. Typically, these have been implemented from reception or year one upwards in age. The pilots test the extent to which there is a similar demand for children attending school nurseries. It also tests whether extending the school day results in children moving from private and third sector settings to school nurseries, creating capacity for younger children. Some pilots will also add holiday provision.

- b) School nurseries offering spaces for 2–3-year-olds

Where there is capacity within existing school workforce and premises, pilots will be run to extend nursery provisions to 2-3-year-olds.

- c) A non-Government nursery operating from school premises

Where there is appropriate capacity within the existing school premises, a provider will be invited to establish a new nursery provision. In addition to providing additional spaces for 2-3-year-olds, the pilot will operate as a pathfinder, identifying the issues that require resolution for this operating model. This helps Government commission similar models, should they be required, in a much more informed way.

Running pilots

All pilots have specific scope, objectives and measurement. Head teachers have the discretion, as is standard, to implement the pilots in a way that suits their school community and workforce, subject to existing regulatory standards. It is not required that all pilots are identical in scope and approach.

2. Approach – workforce support

The co-development (i.e. with wider sector input) and delivery of the early year's workforce plan sits with Skills Jersey.

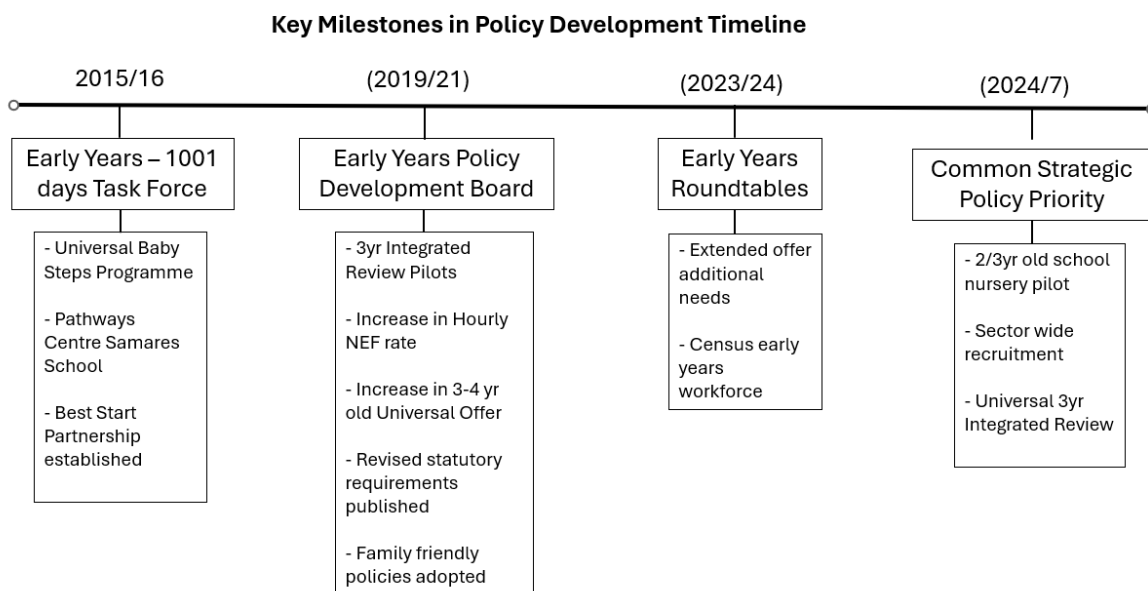
The plan is in development and the main areas include:

Area	Description
Recruitment	Undertake a sector wide recruitment campaign in Q4 2024. In addition to identifying potential candidates this exercise will provide valuable data to underpin other actions in the workforce plan. Campaign link: Career Pathways - Best Start Jersey
Incentives	Identify what Government incentives are in place to recruit and/or retain workforce. To include a review of how the Control of Housing and Work Law supports the sector.
Employer proposition - pay	Review compensation profile by role and setting through the second <i>all setting</i> survey due to be issued in Q4 2024.
Employer proposition – non-pay	Review non-pay benefits and other components of an employee offer through the second <i>all setting</i> survey due to be issued in Q4 2024.
Model workforce	Complete model workforce review (similar to the approach taken by the school funding formula) to identify core roles and how they may be recruited, deployed and funded.
Qualifications	Review and, as appropriate, build on qualification pathways. To include a review of equivalence for candidates with relevant experience and/or other related qualifications.
CPD	Working through the Best Start Partnership build a Continuous Professional Development Plan (CPD) for the sector. To include approaches to funding (GoJ, employer, employee) and access.
Data	Develop a workforce dashboard to capture employees, turnover, compensation and qualifications and to act as a baseline from which to measure improvement.
Best practice	Identify models of workforce recruitment and retention from other jurisdictions. Identify and implement relevant and transferable approaches to Jersey.

3. Approach – developing future Early Years Policy

Building a coherent Early Years Policy

Early years policy has been a constant area of focus for Ministers over the past ten years. The illustration below captures the headline milestones of how thinking and action has developed in this area.



The current priority of the CSP represents the latest of a series of policy initiatives which has, in part, enabled the current Minister to progress with some early pilots.

In 2026 communicate how the broader policy objective of establishing a universal offer for 2-3-year-olds can be achieved. This position will be informed by:

- Learning from the pilots including insights from children & families, providers and regulators.
- Key conclusions from the report following the series of *Roundtable* events with early years stakeholders in 2023/2024.
- Results of financial modelling with sector representatives which can be applied to future scenario planning to the running cost for a typical early year's provider.
- A better understanding of national and international approaches to establish similar policy in this area. Specifically in terms of funding and governance arrangements.

4. Review availability of spaces in St Helier

The financial services sector comprises the largest proportion of the economy (36.7%, Statistics Jersey 2022). Feedback received from this sector was the demand for nursery places and school wrap-around care (breakfast and after school clubs) in St Helier that reflect the working day.

An initial review of existing Government properties in St. Helier has been completed. No properties have been identified as suitable for a nursery setting.

The next stage is to have a wider sweep of:

- Other properties in St. Helier that Government may have some form of interest in.
- Other Government properties adjacent to St. Helier and wider, that may provide opportunities for a nursery setting.

It is relevant to note that, unlike many jurisdictions, Jersey benefits from being geographically small making distance to different settings more accessible.

Initial reviews of opportunities for new build/material development have been discounted on the basis that:

1. Capital funding has already been prioritised and allocated (proposed) for 2025 – 2028
2. There are several school sites that, with minor investment, might provide opportunities for nursery provision. These opportunities should be exhausted before considering more substantive and higher cost alternatives.

This work will be completed by end June 2025.

Data & evidence

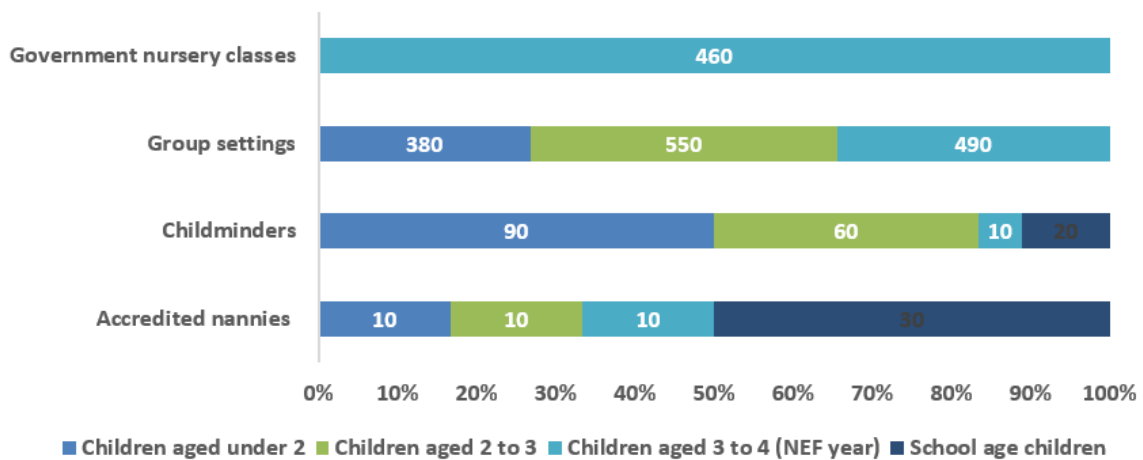
Pilots - Data will be collected to inform decisions at the end of school pilots (typically -continue, change, end) along with providing input to policy development.

Places - The demand for 2-3-year-old places in the sector will be established. Data will be collected to assess the impact of a reducing birth rate on demand for nursery placements. This assessment will also consider the forecast impact of migration and any latent demand for nursery spaces for 2-3-year-olds.

There is anecdotal evidence, through engaging directly with settings, that there is pent up demand (waiting lists) and the sector survey conducted in Q4 2023 showed a difference (for all settings) of c350 filled places between those for 3-4-year-olds and those for 2-3-year-olds.

The setting survey from which this data is extracted was in its first year in 2023. It is relevant to note there may be some misclassification of figures for children in the NEF year at Group Settings (e.g. either on the cusp of the year or not receiving NEF). The impact of this may be the assessment of capacity required for 2-3-year-olds is overstated. The second iteration of the *all setting* survey in 2024 will look to clarify this position.

Figure 3: Number of filled places by provider type and age of child, 2023



We will undertake a second whole sector survey in Q4 2024.

Parental engagement

Some school pilots will include surveys to parents to better understand their needs as they relate to extended school days and holiday provisions.

Additionally, during the CSP period, we will survey parents to develop a better understanding of their broader needs as they relate to early childhood education and care.

Evidence

Optimising early childhood education and childcare

In 2023, the Government of Jersey commissioned the ISOS Partnership to collect evidence of best practice in early childhood education. This evidence is being used to shape future policy.

The report focused on the big picture questions. These relate to the why, what, when, where, who, and how of early childhood education and care in Jersey.

This CSP builds on this evidence base and further extensive engagement conducted with a wide range of early years sector representatives through a series of *Roundtable* events held in late 2023 and early 2024.

The full reports are published on gov.je and can be found here:

[Early Years Policy Work](#)

The summary recommendations of the *Roundtables*, positioned as *policy imperatives*, are reproduced below:

- A. Provide accessible support from the very start, and ensure no child or family goes unseen or falls through the net between services by developing ***more integrated community- based centres and clear multi-agency local support offers for families with children from pre-birth to the end of their school reception year.*** New locality models could be scoped and piloted in priority communities in the near term, with a clear plan put in place for their sustainable development across the island.
- B. Improve the supply and shape of early education and childcare places to better match the needs of Jersey families' by ***engaging and listening to parents to better understand needs and plan provision, encouraging school and private and voluntary providers to work together to address gaps in flexible provision in local communities, and by prioritising workforce challenges across the island.*** These are all areas where action could – and should - be taken immediately.

- C. Enable all families to make positive choices about how they balance family life and work without affordability being a barrier by *extending the funded offer, starting with a funded early childhood education and care (ECEC) for 2–3-year-old children from low-income households or otherwise at risk of disadvantage, and a stronger offer for children with emerging special educational needs and disability*. Better enable parents to support their children in the first 1001 days of life, *including through more generous paid parental leave offer for families from lower income groups*.
- D. Address challenges to recruiting and retaining capable and motivated early years practitioners through *an innovative modern workforce strategy which adopts new recruitment approaches to attract the most able and motivated candidates, addresses low pay and regulatory challenges faced by childminders, and draws on community expertise and strengths to build quality throughout the system*. There is also a desire to *develop the whole early years workforce in a more integrated way* in the future, so that those working with young children can develop more common understandings.
- E. Continue to evolve and strengthen systems for oversight and accountability, *including engaging parents to understand if they need or would benefit from more/different information about early education and childcare providers, ensuring reviewer expertise is constantly refreshed with the latest international evidence, and fully harnessing learning from reviews to inform improvements across the system*. Some feel there would be merit in a more integrated approach to accountability and looking at alternative models that which have the potential to deliver greater independence, such as the Jersey Care Commission.

Whilst the CSP commitments are not intended to respond to policy imperatives in full, they are intended to align. A mapping of CSP, and pre-CSP activity to policy imperatives is summarised below:

Policy imperatives	Activity underway/planned
A – integrated services	<p>Two schools will operate nascent versions of family centres with multiple services being offered by different Government and external partners. They will not provide childcare, rather they will support families of nursery age children either attending, or due to attend the school (pre-CSP).</p> <p>Integrated reviews, at 3-years-old have been piloted successfully in 2023/2024 and will roll out from January 2025. These reviews combine a teacher/nursery staff with a community nursery nurse/health visitor and parents (pre-CSP).</p> <p>The third year (2024/2025) of a pilot commissioned and co-funded by ECOF¹ places speech therapists in schools to determine their impact on the speech, language and communication needs of children (pre-CSP).</p>

¹ Every Child Our Future

B – system development	<p>Survey parents to better understand their needs (CSP).</p> <p>Enable non-Government providers to operate from Government schools (CSP)</p> <p>Identify opportunities to better deploy existing workforce across the island (within workforce plan) (CSP).</p> <p>Review sector funding model (CSP).</p>
C – funded 2-3 places	<p>Increase in funding to JCCT² to provide places and support for 2-3-year-olds with additional needs (pre-CSP).</p> <p>Pilots in schools will provide new funded places for 2-3-year-olds, initially focussing on those children with additional needs (CSP).</p> <p>Policy development towards a universal offer for 2-3-year-olds (CSP).</p>
D – workforce strategy	<p>Develop a workforce strategy to support recruitment and retention of early years workforce (CSP).</p>
E - oversight	<p>Strategic policy development work continues, with a particular focus on the identified need of evolving and strengthening systems for oversight and accountability.</p>

Ongoing engagement with key stakeholders is required to encourage collaboration and strengthen decision making. Regular policy updates will continue to be provided via the Best Start Partnership.

² Jersey Childcare Trust

Investment

Jersey already provides multiple methods of support for parents of young children through a blend of social policy, taxation and direct payment. A summary of that support is below:

Customer and Local Services (CLS)	0-1 years	1-2 years	2-3 years	3-4 years	4-12 years
<i>Universal</i>	Parental grant				
	Parental allowance				
	Home responsibility protection (HRP) ¹ Cannot claim HRP while receiving parental benefits.				
<i>Targeted</i>	Income support (Parental Allowance considered as income. Income support reduced by amount of parental allowance)				
Treasury	0-1 years	1-2 years	2-3 years	3-4 years	4-12 years
<i>Universal (i.e. tax payers)</i>	Tax relief for children				
<i>Universal (i.e. tax payers)</i>	Childcare tax relief (If you receive income support towards your childcare payments, these can't be claimed as a deduction for tax.)				
Children, Young People, Education and Skills (CYPES)	0-1 years	1-2 years	2-3 years	3-4 years	4-12 years
<i>Universal</i>				Nursery Education Fund (NEF) scheme	
<i>Targeted</i>	Special Needs Inclusion Programme available from birth to school age, who have an additional need and are accessing a private nursery or preschool setting. ²				
<i>Targeted</i>			Targeted 2-3 year offer		
<i>Mixed</i>				Wrap around provision Variable provision and access across settings.	

¹ Contribution credits for parents working 20 hours or less

² Special Needs Inclusion Programme (JCCT)

Jersey: current level of Government of Jersey subsidy for childcare (October 2024).

Age of child (years)	Estimated cost of a full-time nursery place	Financial support from Government	Cost to family net of support from Government	Proportion of cost paid by family	Proportion of cost paid by Government
0-2	£27,100	Max £4,940 via childcare tax relief	£22,160 (£1,847 pcm)	82%	18%
2-3	£24,810	Max £4,940 via childcare tax relief	£19,870 (£1656 pcm)	80%	20%
3-4	£22,116	£9,462 via 30 hours free childcare (NEF) and £3,290 via childcare tax relief	£9,364 (£780 pcm)	42%	58%
5+	£9,250	£1,976 via childcare tax relief	£7,274 (£606 pcm)	79%	21%

Please note – calculations based on sample of published nursery and other costs. Methodology and assumptions available on request.

This Budget 2025 – 2028 proposes investment in this CSP as set out below:

Revenue Expenditure Growth				2025	2026	2027	2028
£'000				Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Head of Expenditure	Reference	Description					
Education and Lifelong Learning	I-CYP-GP25-001	Extend Nursery and Childcare Provision - CSP		1,517	2,358	3,423	4,629

Extract: Proposed Budget 2025 - 2028

The investment provides the potential to support multiple aspects of the CSP. The specific profile of investment will be informed by the plans for, and progress of, the pilots, workforce actions and associated work. The table below provides an indication of investment allocation:

Area	Description
Pilots	To cover initiation funds (resources, minor alterations to premises) and operational costs (workforce, consumables) of pilots.
Workforce	To provide funds to support recruitment and retention of workforce in the early years sector. Additionally, to provide funds for continuous professional development of the workforce to support the ambition to continually improve the quality of provision.
2-3 funding	Specific child and/or place investment for 2–3-year-olds with additional needs. This aspect will be the main driver of year-on-year increased investment in any move towards a (more) universal provision.
Specialist provision	To provide funding for additional support from other specialists in development of more integrated services to children.
Inclusion	To reflect specific needs of individual and/or cohorts of young children in nurseries.
Quality and oversight	To increase quality and regulatory capacity commensurate with an increase in providers (types, volume).

Areas to develop

In delivering the CSP and related change in the early years sector it is important to reflect issues that might arise and to ensure appropriate mitigation is put in place. Areas include, not exhaustively:

Area	Description/action
Aligning increase in demand with supply of places	Ensure that any increase in demand for nursery places created by increased Government funding aligns with the availability of those spaces.
Impact of policy options	As pilots scale to wider policy options, consider impact on existing providers. To include an assessment of how childminders could access any funding for 2-3-year-olds.
Uncertainty of demand for places	Undertake modelling to more precisely determine the potential uptake for a universal 2-3-year-old provision and the gap compared with existing provision.
Investment value	Use the place modelling, along with an assessment of cost of provision, to determine range of investment value. Develop options for how this could be funded.
Workforce shortfall	Co-develop and implement a workforce plan.
Stakeholder engagement	Develop communications and engagement approach, to build on the Roundtable Series. Utilise Best Start Partnership model for whole sector engagement.
Policy direction of early childhood education and care	Policy consideration required in the context of purpose of schools in Jersey (as potential providers) and statutory nature of early years provisions.
Regulatory oversight and quality support	Assess if/how any increase in provision affects Government's capability and capacity to provide regulatory oversight and quality improvement.
Sector funding shortfall	Existing funding is part Government and part charitable donations. The latter is inconsistent and consequently at risk. In moving towards a universal provision some existing charitable funding may need replacing with recurring Government funding.
Children's Rights	A Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) has been prepared as part of CSP submission and will need to be adapted as future policy is developed.
Voice of babies and young children	Ensure whole sector access to training for, and use of, the Early Childhood Participation Toolkit: Early Childhood Participation Toolkit - Best Start Jersey .

Legislation	Education and Daycare Laws will need to be reviewed and updated as this work evolves.
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