

Deputy R Ward
Chairman
Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel
Scrutiny Office
Morier House
St Helier
JE1 1DD



24th September 2019

Dear Deputy Ward

Thank you for your letter inviting the Jersey Child Care Trust (JCCT) to assist with the Panel's review of certain actions with the Government Plan, specifically 'improving education outcomes: Early years – p.26 and p.36 of Government Plan.'

The JCCT is a small, local charity making a big difference for children living with disabilities and or challenge. By putting families first, we deliver a variety of programmes to enable all our children to have the best start. We therefore welcome the work of the Early Years Policy Development Board, in particular its focus starting with a reformed nursery education offer. We also welcome The Government Plan's commitment to 'reviewing (its) support to children in the crucial early years of life'. These early years are a unique but brief period available to positively set the foundations for a child's future development. Indeed, the results of investing in educational and developmental resources in the early years provide better outcomes not only for the children, but for the whole of society and these gains span multiple generations¹.

With one of the Panel's focus on sustainability of projects, it is important for the Government to take account of two key programmes run by the JCCT in the area of early years.

Our Special Needs Inclusion Programme, supports a total of around 30+ children a year with disabilities to go to private day nurseries and preschools across the Island. Without us, children with disabilities would not be able to access private settings from babies up to school age. Indeed, children with disabilities who qualify for the Nursery Education Funded 20 hours (NEF) in private settings are not able to access these funded hours without the support of the JCCT. We work in partnership with the Early Years Inclusion Team (EYIT), based in Children, Young People, Education and Skills, who advise us when a child's need for support is above a level achievable by a nursery even with the support and guidance from the EYIT. This programme is currently supporting more children than ever before and this year we forecast a £20,000 additional spend against our budget.

Our Best Start Plus Nursery Funding provides part time (up to 12 hours per week) nursery access for 2 – 3 year olds (before they qualify for NEF) who have developmental needs. Research suggests that

¹ The Heckman Equation: <https://heckmanequation.org/the-heckman-equation>

access to a high quality nursery can help close the gap². Additionally the children are living in lower income families that also are experiencing other challenges too. This year we will have funded nursery places for 80+ children³.

The JCCT recognise that it is part of a much bigger island early years offer putting children first. As a charity, we have welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the Policy Development Board's engagement event alongside Government, private sector and voluntary sector colleagues.

Last year, our charity invested £427,228⁴ in putting children first and this year we expect to spend around £485,000 supporting children and their families. We look forward to future opportunities to be consulted and involved in designing an improved future offer for children and families that perhaps introduces even more examples of the Government working closely and in partnership with the voluntary and private sectors.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "FVacher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fiona Vacher
Executive Director

² Study of Early Education and Development (SEED)

³ The Best Start Partnership's Nursery Funding Task and Finish Group in March 2018 highlighted 125 children that Health Visitors identified as children who would likely meet the criteria for the JCCT's nursery funding.

⁴ The JCCT received £133,800 from the Government as a grant in 2018.