

STATES OF JERSEY

Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel Early Years Review

MONDAY, 15TH OCTOBER 2007

Panel:

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence (Chairman)
Deputy J. Gallichan of St. Mary
Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier
Dr. C. Hamer (Advisor to the Panel)

Witnesses:

Senator M.E. Vibert (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture)
Mr. M. Lundy (Assistant Director of Schools and Colleges and Director Designate)
Ms. Y. Thebault (Early Years Advisor)

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence (Chairman):

I would like to welcome you here this morning and, for the record, we will formally introduce ourselves. I am Deputy Mezbourian of St. Lawrence, the Chairman of the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. To my left the panel members are ...

Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier:

Shona Pitman.

Deputy J. Gallichan of St. Mary:

Juliette Gallichan.

Dr. C. Hamer (Advisor to the Panel):

I am Dr. Cathy Hamer. I am an early years teacher, chartered health and educational psychologist and chartered scientist. I was head of Surestart and Early Years in Child Care for a local authority before moving on to be a Policy Research and Practice Consultant and I am currently working with National Children's Bureau in relation to their Early Childhood Unit.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Our 2 officers ...

Mr. W. Millow:

William Millow.

Mr. T. Oldham:

Tim Oldham.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Can you introduce yourselves, please? Can I just point out that the microphones are for recording purposes, not to project our voices, so if we can speak up, please, so that we are all clear on what is being said.

Senator M.E. Vibert (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

Senator Mike Vibert, Minister for Education, Sport and Culture.

Mr. M. Lundy (Assistant Director of Schools and Colleges and Director Designate):

Mario Lundy, Assistant Director of Schools and Colleges and Director Designate.

Ms. Y. Thebault (Early Years Advisor):

Yasmin Thebault, Early Years Advisor.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Thank you. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that scrutiny witnesses are covered by privilege and I believe you have seen the documents to that effect. There is a different one for States Members to those who are non-States Members. So, at last we are getting underway with the hearings for the Early Years Review that we are undertaking. You are aware that we have carried out some comprehensive background research and looked at vast amounts of evidence. We have had submissions from the public which we will be addressing. Today what we would like you to do, Senator, is discuss or tell us the background behind your decision to introduce free nursery provision for all 3 and 4-year-olds within the Island for 20 hours and 38 weeks a year. What we have elected to do is ask questions at the end, if that keeps you happy, because we do not want to interrupt you and let you get sidetracked and, similarly, we do not want to become sidetracked ourselves. As you are aware, we have provisionally asked for you to come back to have a final meeting with us at which we will address questions that are raised during hearings that we are yet to have with organisations such as the JCCT (Jersey Child Care Trust) and the Jersey Early Years Association. I wonder if I could just ask you, Senator, to provisionally look at the 9th November 2007 for that final meeting. You do not need to confirm to us now but if you can, please, confirm that that date would be suitable for you. I will let you decide how you want to do it. I hope all 3 of you will contribute to the presentation. In your own time,

Senator.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Well, I have not prepared a specific presentation because, as you know, we submitted documentation to you which I hope gave a fairly clear indication of how we got to the point we are at now. Going back a bit further, I suppose, the thought processes that occurred were that when I first became President - as it then was - of the Education, Sport and Culture Committee I quickly became aware of the fact that we had a system whereby we were pledged by the States' policy to offer free nursery education to all 3 to 4-year-olds, but that it was a very slow process in that the way we were doing it and the way it had been done for the past (then) 17 years, I think, was each time we redeveloped a primary school we attached a nursery class. There was an agreement with the Treasury that funding was provided to run that nursery class and there was an agreement with the then Establishment Committee to agree to the staffing as well. So that was the system I inherited. The inequity in it soon became clear as did the fact that because of the way it was not universal that all children were not able to benefit from this early years education. It was somewhat of a lottery based on the clear criteria that we have now set out. So the Committee started - and then when it became a Ministry I continued - trying to find a way in which this could be resolved. Obviously there are a number of ways: continue with the existing policy, try and speed up the existing policy, or you would come up with a new policy. Looking at the existing policy, if we had the space to build nursery classes on to every school and the money to do so, it would in time have resulted in free universal nursery education in nursery classes attached to primary schools for all children in the Island who wished to take advantage of it. Looking ahead, that was a very, very long-term policy and in the meantime we were not offering that universal opportunity. So we put our minds to considering other policies and alternatives and we held meetings, as you would expect, with the Jersey Early Years Association, advice from the officers and so on. That finally led to the policy we have come up with. The architect of that policy and trying to address the fundamental problems as we saw them, as I saw them, of how to give each and every 3 to 4-year-old the opportunity to access early years education and how could we achieve it, perhaps I could ask Mario - I know you want to hear from us all - to talk about what we came up with and how we got there.

Mr. M. Lundy:

I think one point that probably needs to be emphasised is that when the former Education Committee developed its policy to build nursery classes at each provided primary school, there was not much in the way of a private sector. So at the time it was as much about providing nursery education as it was about stimulating the private sector. If you look back to around about the early 1980s you will see that since then the growth in provided nursery classes has been matched by an increase in private sector provision. So, in fact, what initially was a good policy done for the right reasons created some problems as the private sector grew in the Island, and obviously there was competition for places. Now, in looking at the policy, there was a real opportunity here because as we know in the UK one of the challenges is

capacity. There is not the capacity at this point in time, we are given to understand, for the Government to deliver all that it would wish to deliver in terms of places for children in the early years. The capacity exists in Jersey and, therefore, there was an opportunity to develop a partnership with the private sector that would utilise that capacity and enable all 3 to 4-year-old children to have access to a period of time, whatever that period of time might be. Now, obviously the children who are in nursery classes at the moment have access to 30 hours a week, 38 weeks a year. It is a normal nursery education provision. The rationale for 20 hours really comes from the research of the EPPI (Evidence for Policy and Practice Information) project which is basically saying that the benefits will accrue in 20 hours a week. So, looking at those opportunities, the fact that the capacity was there, the opportunity to develop a working partnership with the private sector, and this is an important issue because the majority of private sector providers have already embraced the foundation stage curriculum. There are issues, obviously, in respect of relative qualifications, training, et cetera, the provisions themselves, but the majority of private providers have embraced the foundation stage curriculum and the Department for Education, Sport and Culture already provides a fulltime dedicated teacher advisor to the private sector to support the development of the foundation stage curriculum. So the blocks were in place in a sense for the development of a more cohesive partnership - providing, of course, that private sector providers were willing to engage - that would provide capacity and give us the opportunity to develop the quality right across the piece.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Perhaps at this stage can I ask Yasmin to talk a little bit about the early years foundation stage curriculum and how it has been adopted.

Ms. Y. Thebault:

Yes. The early years foundation stage curriculum was introduced in England in the year 2000. I would like to give you a little bit of the background from where I come from. I have a degree in child psychology and I worked as a nursery teacher in England. I work with Professor Barbara Tizard at the Thomas Coram Research Unit. My whole career has been in early years education. When I came to Jersey in 1983 there was no state provision and I was appointed to lead the early years strategy. My vision was always that it should be integrated, that it should have high quality, it should provide an environment where care and education were integrated, the provision of a secure place where learning and care were seamless, and the foundation stage curriculum guidance I felt provided that. We introduced a huge amount of training soon after the curriculum guidance was introduced. We looked at the needs of our children in Jersey. We looked at qualifications and, in fact, looking back, we have consistently embraced the private sector in every single training initiative. So there has, in fact, always been a partnership from the earliest years in terms of training. I feel that from observations and from dialogue with colleagues we have now come to a stage where there is a shared understanding of what young children need and how we need to make sure that the emotional and social wellbeing of young

children is absolutely paramount and that learning and play and work with parents should be absolutely seamless.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Can I say that perhaps starting from the point, to go back, that we believe that it is evidence-based and proven that good, high quality early years education is a social benefit for the children and for society as a whole. I do not know whether you want to go into the background of that but I took that, as far as all the research we have done and we have been doing it for 20-odd years, as a given. So I have not gone back into all the research, some of which is included in the pack, as to why we believe this is a social good but we do. Yasmin touched there about the partnership with the private sector. We have worked very closely with them particularly on the early years foundation stage curriculum. We have also got the role of registration of the premises and so on. We worked with JEYA (Jersey Early Years Association) and they have been supportive of the proposals we have come up with. We have been aware in trying to develop a public/private partnership of the pitfalls that could be there and one thing we wanted to ensure would not happen would be what I might like to describe as the private rent rebate scenario. What we did not want to do was to just put up the cost of childcare by subsidising it so that then the cost for it could be put up. So the proposal is to work in partnership with the providers but having a contract between us and ensuring that it does not act as something just driving up cost. That was an important part of the thing we have developed, and we have been working with the private sector but there would be a lot of work to do once we knew this was going to go ahead. It would be, I think, counterproductive to involve all the private providers and ourselves with detailed work when there is no funding for it and it is not in that case. We have had discussions and we have a framework, but we do not want to do a lot of wasted work and also raise hopes with the private sector providers and then nothing transpires. But they are very keen to work with us to work out the fine details of the system. As you know, the proposals went to the Council of Ministers. We looked at alternatives and went back to the Council of Ministers and the Council of Ministers agreed and approved the proposals in principle but could not find that there was the funding available generally within the States to introduce it at present. Certainly I looked at our own budget and it is not possible to find the funding available with our own budget, with the efficiency savings we have been making over the past number of years and with the changes we had to make to the higher education funding system in the past year. So I asked the States to increase the budget overall to allow this system to be introduced but was unsuccessful, so I welcome very much Scrutiny looking at it. I will be very interested to hear what the results are and I hope it will enable us to revitalise and take on board what Scrutiny are saying and take the issue forward. I am passionate about education in general and I am particularly passionate about early years education. I have no intention of letting it rest and will be pursuing some way of making sure all young children in the Island have the opportunity to access early years education.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Okay. So, ready for our questions then. Thank you. We do have some questions prepared, obviously, in advance of the hearing, but I wonder if I could start by disregarding our prepared questions for the moment and going back to something that, Senator Vibert, you said about the inequity of the current system, of allocation of places which you referred to as a lottery.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I said somewhat of a lottery.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Yes. My shorthand is not that good! I wonder whether you can tell me what consideration has been given to resolving the current lottery.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

We have a set of criteria which I believe we have supplied.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Yes.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

We have a set of criteria and we believe that that is the best criteria we have come up with to ensure that we get the balance we need. When I referred to “somewhat of a lottery” it is because even within that criteria some of it is down to where you live. If the primary school that is in your catchment area has a nursery class, you are more likely to get a place than if you are in a catchment area where the primary school has not yet got a nursery class. So that is the sort of element on it. The problem we have about trying to make it more equitable is we have nursery class places for approximately half the cohort of 3 to 4-year-olds. You cannot make it more equitable really in many ways without having more places. We cannot “magic up” more places. We have looked at a whole number of things. There is the issue of whether you should offer more part-time places, for example, but that has its own problems in itself. Certainly, we are restricted by the number of physical places we have to offer. I do not know if Mario would like to say anything on that?

Mr. M. Lundy:

I think it is important, really, to be very clear about what it is that the policy has set out to achieve. The inequity is a symptom of the problem and obviously you can take a number of steps to reduce the inequity. The real challenge has been how to provide high quality, early years education and care for all 3 to 4-year-olds. In addressing that challenge, there are some difficult issues. One is around access, so parents often who might require full-day care because of working arrangements, in order to reconcile their family life and their working life sometimes take up the nursery class place, which means that

maybe a parent who is not working, who just values the concept of nursery education, might find it difficult to get that place. It is about creating a system that more adequately meets the needs of families, children and parents.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Sorry, can I just interrupt you there? Can you just repeat that because I am not sure if I quite understood what you were saying? I think you have said it differently to some of the issues that I have read about. Would you say it again?

Mr. M. Lundy:

Well, there are 3 main issues: access, equity and affordability. In terms of access, it is partly about ensuring that parents have access to a place for their children, but, of course, affordability comes into that. They may have access to a place but not be able to afford it. It is also about having access to the right type of place. So if you are a parent who requires day care for your child for up to maybe 5.00 p.m. in the evening, then a nursery class place may not best meet your needs. Of course, it is free, so for those parents it might be the best thing to take the nursery class until 3.00 p.m. or 3.30 p.m. and then to make alternative arrangements after that. We would be concerned about the impact on children there because you do not want to create a system where children are moving around throughout the course of the day in order to meet the needs of the parents. So if you have a mixed economy of nursery classes and private sector day care provision and if the selection of those places is not based on the cost, then parents are more able to get the type of place that best meets their needs.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I think you also referred, though, to parents who do not need to work and then taking up places?

Mr. M. Lundy:

Well, the nursery education policy, while it was recognised that it would support working parents, was driven by child development concerns. It was driven by the needs of the child and it was not expected at the outset that one would have to be a working parent in order to access it.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Certainly, my view is it is still driven by the needs of the child and it is an adjunct that it helps with childcare provision, but the driving force, as Yasmin was saying before, was the development of the child. We have seen the benefit in our own schools through having nursery classes attached and so that is it, but we have to be aware for many parents cost is a considerable issue. They are making choices based on cost rather than possibly what they would make otherwise in the best interests of the child. Costs are a driving factor for them.

Deputy S. Pitman:

The situation that you have just described, you could get then parents who desperately need a place but could not because the places are all filled but some of those places are where the parent that does not work has the time and does not need that nursery place.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

We are going on about the parent; what we are talking about is the child and the concern of the child.

Deputy S. Pitman:

But what I am saying is that could be something that --

Mr. M. Lundy:

If you were to go back to the beginning, what we had in the Island were almost 2 different types of provision. There was nursery education which was primarily obviously purpose-built environments, qualified teachers. It was about ensuring that children were best placed when they started school to take full advantage of the educational opportunities. It was about ensuring school-readiness. It was driven by education philosophy and at the same time you had childcare provision which was primarily about supporting parents who were working. The proposal is to bring the 2 together and the key word here is "integrated" to give parents choice rather than to route them down a particular line basically because that is the provision that is available.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Sorry, can I just make clear that we have criteria that favours children who we think will benefit most from nursery education but we also have criteria - very important to us - that the nursery class should have a balance. It should have children, if you like, that reflect society in it, not just one aspect of society. That is very important.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Excuse me, I should have said earlier that you will be aware that advisors are now able to ask questions themselves directly of witnesses.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

As a member of PPC (Privileges and Procedures Committee) I am aware.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I am sorry I did not say that. Dr. Hamer I believe had something to ask.

Dr. C. Hamer:

Can I just ask about your admissions procedure and in terms of the policy - because certainly I have noted that policy - how efficient do you consider that to be?

Mr. M. Lundy:

I think clearly there are a number of judgments that have to be made when you are allocating the places. In terms of the criteria for allocating the places, I think you probably have the early policy where we elaborated on those criteria. Particular consideration is given to children with socially the most educational needs, children from families with particular needs, and most of these will be referrals. Our parenting services will inform us; our primary schools will be aware of this; our specialist services will inform us of families who fall into those particular areas and ensure that we can for the best part make provision. Children suspected of being at risk. If there are children who have already got siblings at the school, obviously that is a consideration. We try to balance the number of boys and girls in class so there is no gender inequalities and we try to ensure that children come from a cross-section of backgrounds so that no particular social group dominates. We try to at least ensure that about 20 per cent of the children come from outside of catchment so that catchment areas with a primary school that does not have a nursery class are not totally disadvantaged. Now, in applying all those criteria, obviously it is quite complex. Most of the decisions are made on the basis of the application form supported by knowledge that might come from specialist agencies.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Of course, the reason we have to have criteria at all is that we do not have the places to offer everybody the same opportunity.

Dr. C. Hamer:

Sure, I understand that. It seems to me there are opportunities there for quite a lot of value judgments to creep in. Has any consideration been given to centralising the admissions procedure?

Mr. M. Lundy:

The admissions procedures have now been centralised. They were centralised as of last year, so I think if you note in your policy that the admissions are made by the head teacher, you have the older version and I have a newer version for you here.

Dr. C. Hamer:

Thank you. That is really helpful.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Can I ask with regard to means testing firstly, why you have not gone for that option and, secondly, again because you have decided not to go that way, the situation may arise where children from a

wealthy family could take up places and leave children from a poorer family unable to get a place in a nursery.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Partly that was answered in the criteria. Children come from a cross-section of backgrounds so that no particular social group dominates.

Deputy S. Pitman:

But you said that really you are looking at children's needs and vulnerable children and more disadvantaged children.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Absolutely.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Where does that situation lead?

Mr. M. Lundy:

I think it is important to add means testing is an option that has been considered and means testing is a good solution if you simply want to remove the inequity. If you introduce means testing, you are not necessarily going to do a lot for the affordability, and affordability is a major factor in Jersey for parents who cannot access a provided place. As I said earlier, it depends which problem you are trying to solve and the challenge is to provide a nursery experience for all 3 and 4-year-olds to ensure that parents have accessed the type of provision that best meets their needs and to ensure that it is affordable. Now, there is a concern that the introduction of means testing would in itself bring additional administrative burdens, but at the same time it would not necessarily solve the problem. It might discourage some of the hard to reach families from taking up a nursery class place. Means testing is also going to lead to an increased call on childcare tax relief and an increased call on Income Support because the system that we have at the moment whereby 50 per cent of the children have access to a free place, those parents are not benefiting from childcare tax relief and they are not benefiting from Income Support. So if you were to introduce charges and means test, you would need to introduce charges that I guess were around about the same level as the private sector otherwise you would be accused of still perpetuating the inequity and unfair competition.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Can I ask then how much work you have done with the Social Security Department in developing this option?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

The means testing option you are referring to?

Deputy S. Pitman:

No, the one that you came up with in the States, your proposition.

Mr. M. Lundy:

It was an inter-agency working group which involved ... yes. That inter-agency working group reported to the Council of Ministers and published its progress and findings in the States.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

As regards means testing and other options and charging and so on, we had our own views to sort of make sure and have some confidence in what we are doing. In the pack I provided, in section 5, in January of this year we had a report done by the National Day Care Trust on the options and they state quite clearly some of the issues with means testing, the conclusion and so on, including -and I quote from page 7: "Introducing charges and means testing of nursery education would have a disproportionate impact on low income and migrant families and may encourage other parents to seek sessions rather than continuous educational experience. It is possible that the children who would most benefit from quality nursery education would be denied it." That was the National Day Care Trust report we had looking at it.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Part of means testing would be to give an advantage there to poorer families where they would not have to pay, I presume, if they are means tested?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Yes, that is so, but as I say, it is quite clearly set out and I do not intend to read it all, but in section 5 of the pack we gave you it shows why this does not always work in that way and the unintended consequences that come from it.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Thank you, Minister. I think we will discuss that among ourselves as we have further questions for you. The Council of Ministers proposed recently that the Social Strategy Group, to be led by Dr. Ian Skinner and the Children's Executive: "Lead a children's agenda embracing support for families with children from 0 to 5 years." Could one of you please clarify the composition of the Social Strategy Group and speak to us about this?

Mr. M. Lundy:

The Social Strategy Group was formed through the Chief Minister's Office. I am not aware of the individuals who are on the Social Strategy Group apart from the chair, Ian Skinner.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

We did set up a group, which Mario was on, trying to look at the whole issue of 0 to 5 and so on and I do not know whether that is what is being referred to. We did take that forward, but in the timescale and also with Income Support coming in, in one of the reports you can see that it was recommended that for the Social Security side we wait to see what happened with Income Support and how that affected it before taking this any further forward. So yes, it is very important to look at the whole 0 to 5, the whole issue of childcare and children, but my own view is that this does not mean you should not do anything in areas where you can see that things need to be done. That is why I continued with the early years education proposals.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Sorry, can I just clarify, please, what you said there? You referred to the Income Support. Did you say or my understanding was that you are not sure what has happened with the Social Strategy Group to date?

Mr. M. Lundy:

I think there are 2 different things. The Social Strategy Group developed a social strategy policy for the Island. The group that was established to look at early years was a group made up of officers from the various departments who had a stake in the early years agenda. Of course, when you are looking at early years and apart from provision itself, you are looking at the way that you develop family policy, policies that support the family, and that will be around benefits, it will be around taxation, it will be around working with employers to encourage some sort of responsibility there and it will be looking at the way that you support through benefit systems. Now, the recommendations of that group were that it would not be a good time to be looking at those things because the tax mechanisms in Jersey were going through tremendous change. Income Support was due to be introduced but at that time there was no real understanding by officers of the group of how that would impact on the Island. The recommendation was that these changes needed to be in before you would start modifying them to take account of early years.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I am a bit confused about which group you mean. There are 2 groups. There was the officer group working on 0 to 5 and there was a wider Social Strategy Group of which I was one of the corporate parents, which we have had the report and so on.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I think it is the officer group, yes, that Mario was just referring to.

Mr. M. Lundy:

Yes, and I think the report of the officer group is in the bundle that was provided to the Scrutiny Panel.

Dr. C. Hamer:

Is there, in fact, a clear strategy then for 0 to 5-year-olds?

Mr. M. Lundy:

Is there a clear strategy? There are many elements of a clear strategy. I think in --

Dr. C. Hamer:

So what elements are in place?

Mr. M. Lundy:

Childcare tax relief. There was a childcare allowance and a school-age discount scheme. The school-age discount scheme was about supporting parents whose children -- it was 0 to 12 years of age, so children who might require some care after the school day. In addition to that, obviously there was the nursery education policy. These are the main elements offered, clearly.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Jersey Child Care Trust.

Mr. M. Lundy:

Jersey Child Care Trust was established to support --

Dr. C. Hamer:

What I am really thinking of in terms of a strategy is a very clear vision of integrated services.

Mr. M. Lundy:

There is a clear vision of integrated services which underpins the Minister's proposition for integrated early education and care. If you look in the report that went to the Council of Ministers, and the recommendation was accepted in there that the Island services agencies should work together to develop a comprehensive agenda for children similar to the Every Child Matters agenda in the UK.

Dr. C. Hamer:

So are there plans and an implementation plan for the development and delivery of that vision?

Mr. M. Lundy:

Well, it is early stages because that recommendation was accepted at the end of last year and officers from Health and Social Services and from Education, Sport and Culture have been charged with developing the way forward in that. That work has begun.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Who are those officers, please?

Mr. M. Lundy:

At this point in time I am engaged in that work from Education, Sport and Culture perspective, Dr. Mark Jones from Health and Social Services and Marnie Baudains, the Social Services Manager.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

One of the issues with Social Security is they have been very busy introducing income support. Mario worked very hard on this officer group but it was very difficult to get officer time from some of the other departments, not because they did not want to give it but because it was very difficult for them to create, at comparatively short notice, officer time when they had such major projects ongoing themselves and no spare capacity to get involved in other things.

Mr. M. Lundy:

I think the point was that the introduction of income support was imminent and quite clearly to start tinkering with the mechanisms of income support before it had been introduced, without any full understanding of how the system would impact, would have created some new challenges for us. It would have been difficult to do.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

What is the next step now that income support has been finalised?

Mr. M. Lundy:

The next step as far as the all-Island agenda is concerned is to engage professionals from across the Island who have an interest in child welfare and to include as part of that the existing Children's Executive. The Children's Executive is a cross-agency body that was formed mostly to look at children with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties but they have a wider interest than that. So, to engage them as well in developing this broader agenda for children.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Remember with income support we have approved it but it has not come in yet.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

No, 28th January.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

It has to come in. It is one of the recommendations in one of the reports; we have to see how it settles down because it is a very new system.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Does that necessarily mean, though, that work on an overall strategy should not go forward?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

No, but how income support comes in needs to be taken into account in that work, the reality of it.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Which I am sure it will be. Who chairs this?

Mr. M. Lundy:

At this point in time there have been meetings between Education, Sport and Culture and Health and Social Services really to develop the pathway: who will need to be consulted; who will need to be engaged in this; who will take the lead? That work has just begun.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

So, no chairman at the moment; just informal discussions between departments?

Mr. M. Lundy:

Well, fairly formal discussions between departments but clearly it is about capacity as well.

Dr. C. Hamer:

I was really hoping that you might move us forward in terms of what data you were going to use to feed into that as well and how robust the data management systems were across the various departments in terms of mapping your provision, your needs analysis, your child care sufficiency, those kinds of issues to be able to move forward your strategy.

Mr. M. Lundy

Let us clarify what we are talking about now. We are not talking about the broader children's agenda; we are now talking about the Minister's proposals?

Dr. C. Hamer:

No, we are talking about the broader children's agenda and where your needs assessment comes from.

Mr. M. Lundy:

In terms of the broader children's agenda I think what we have needed to do in order to be able to respond accurately to the questions that you are asking is to bring the people who are engaged with that work. At the moment we are working on developing new data collection methods through the Children's Executive and with other agencies. Each department currently maintains its own set of data but there is obviously data share. From Education, Sport and Culture's perspective we are fully aware of capacity because obviously we know what is out there in terms of our nursery classes. We are responsible for the registration of private sector providers and of family day carers, so we know exactly what is out there in terms of that capacity. We maintain data which enables us to predict the number of youngsters who would be in any age group in any cohort in any year.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Can I ask when you perceive a final strategy to be completed?

Mr. M. Lundy:

Which strategy are we talking about? Are we talking about the early years strategy or the broader children's agenda?

Deputy S. Pitman:

No, early years.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

We have completed an early years strategy. This is what I brought to the States. This is what the whole document is about. That is the early years strategy. The broader strategy we are working on, as Mario has been explaining, but that is quite a large thing, the whole early years thing, and some of the recommendations were included in the progress report for December 2006 in item 4 that we brought to the States, for example, recommendation 47 that my department works with the statistics units and the Jersey Child Care Trust to determine a mechanism for collecting data to establish trends in the use of child care parental preferences and gaps in provision and so on. So there is a lot of work to be done on the wider nought to 5 or whole early years but the early years education agenda for the nursery education is what we have put forward.

Mr. M. Lundy:

Dr. Hamer, I appreciate where you are coming from in terms of the UK (United Kingdom) context of Every Child Matters. There is a lot of work going on in Jersey at the moment which is around children with severe emotional behavioural difficulties, children who are disadvantaged, child protection, et

cetera, and there are fairly robust structures in place at the moment which are currently subject to inspection. I think that looking at this in that context is not a usual thing for Jersey but that is the direction that we are moving. The work is in its infancy. It would be an option, of course, to put this on the back burner until that piece of work has been achieved but I do not think that that would be the preferred option.

Dr. C. Hamer:

No, I would share that entirely.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Thank you. Our first term of reference looks at the effective delivery of early years education and care. Deputy Gallichan has some questions related to that.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

First of all I would like to say that having been doing some intensive reading in the last few weeks I am struck by the enormous complexity of trying to provide something which you think is as simple as early years. I would like to come back to a point which a number of you made about integration of the care and education which I know, Ms. Thebault, you said was fundamental when you first came to the Island. Historically it seems there has been really quite a big divide between care and education. Whether that is artificial or not, I am not sure at this stage. I know that the Minister and you, Mr. Lundy, have reaffirmed that education has been the driver for your strategies. Obviously care and education from the parents' point of view often go hand in hand, and especially with our developments we have in progress regarding the Strategic Plan and our growth of the economy there has to be a joined-up way of looking at it. I would like to know how the department is working with, for example, Economic Development, to try and map out what the parents' requirements are for the workplace and what demographics there are to show how the need is going to change over the next couple of years. That is part A of my question.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

We already do a number of things. We do wrap-around care at some schools and so on. That is trying to provide what the parents want while offering a very, very good environment and provision for the child. All these things, of course, cost money and resources, which is one of the problems. Mario, do you want to expand on what we do?

Mr. M. Lundy:

Yes. I understand that officers from our department have been working with the Chief Minister's Statistics Department to ensure that when they put out their regular surveys now that more information is collected about the requirements of parents in respect of early years, and obviously the data that

comes out of that will be of tremendous use to us. In the past there have been child care surveys. I think there have been 3 child care surveys in the past but what we are looking to do is not to have these periodic child care surveys but to have something that is more regular that provides us with a constant stream of information and allows us to model the provision around that. I think from the Department of Education, Sport and Culture's perspective what would be useful for you to appreciate is that the department has only taken on responsibility for this because up until a year or so ago there was no single States department that had total responsibility for the integrated early years and for child care. The Department for Education, Sport and Culture was primarily responsible for the nursery education policy. So it has taken on this broader remit. Data is collected through the Statistics Department, data is maintained through the Day Care Registration Department within the Department for Education, Sport and Culture, and that is primarily the data that we would use to ascertain need. Obviously once a year when the nursery class allocations are made there is usually a significant number of parents out there who let us know that they have needs that are not being met by the services.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

In excess of 170 this year. Of course, we do surveys and included in the bundle we provided was the survey right at the end that we were trying to ascertain even more information.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Are you considering any incentives perhaps with Economic Development for encouraging more employers to perhaps participate into the early years strategy as a way perhaps of either raising revenue or providing actual core services to you?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Jersey Child Care Trust, one of its remits is encouraging employers to be much more family friendly and that is included in a lot of the Jersey Child Care Trust information. They have been working on that with some success but limited success.

Mr. M. Lundy:

There are large employers who take this very seriously, HSBC for example are one of the employers who take this very seriously. But bearing in mind that the majority of businesses in the Island are very small businesses or small businesses, then it is a real challenge for them.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Yes. Research has been done to try and bring all the issues, paternity, maternity leave, all that, early years, together and I appreciate, as you say, for a small business it can be an absolute prohibitive cost. The last part of my question derives from the first part, really. I have perceived a concern that if we manage to provide enough core places for the 20 hours per week, if that is achievable, people who want

broader care may utilise the 20 hours within a States nursery and only require private provision during the holidays, for example, which of course cannot be budgeted for from a private provider's point of view. It just does not make any economic sense to only provide out-of-hours service, if you see what I mean. Has that been taken into account?

Mr. M. Lundy:

I am not quite sure what you mean.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

What I am saying is if a parent has access during term time to sufficient nursery education but does not have it during the holidays where is the incentive for them to put their child completely with a private nursery? Will there be enough places?

Mr. M. Lundy:

The incentive for parents to put their child with a private nursery is the fact that it will be open during holiday times, the continuity would be there. So that would give the parents the opportunity to make the choice that best suits their needs.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Do you know whether there would be enough availability? It is the balance between parents who do not want any extra care and those who do. Are you sure your figures are right?

Mr. M. Lundy:

There are additional support mechanisms during school holiday times. So at that point is where the play schemes come into effect, all the play schemes that are managed through the Department for Education, Sport and Culture.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Are they in the early years section or just from 5 years?

Mr. M. Lundy:

They are not in the early years section at this point.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Do you think that might be something you would have to ...

Mr. M. Lundy:

I think there is an opportunity to look at the way that we would relate with private sector in order to be

able to offer provision for parents during that time. I think there is an opportunity here. The partnership at the moment has primarily been around discussing the philosophy for early years, the Foundation Stage curriculum, the training, et cetera. The challenges, of course, have been in a business sense because you have 50 per cent of the market which is free and then you have 50 per cent of the market where early years businesses need business stability. I think the opportunity exists through this policy to create a stronger partnership which gives the private sector and parents the opportunity to influence the future strategy for early years and in doing so then to make sure that it is shaped over time to best meet the needs of parents and children on the Island.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

To go back to your question, Deputy Gallichan, there does not appear to be an unfulfilled need at present and I do not know why. I would have thought that the private sector would adjust if there was a need in the future. There are the places there. We talked about giving choice before to parents and I would have thought parents, if they had a universal 20-hour entitlement to term time, parents who wanted care for longer time, would be more likely to choose a private provider who could offer that care, including the 20 hours free, rather than look to go to a nursery class and then find some other provision in the holiday time. I would have thought that is the way that most would consider. But there will be provision just for holiday time; there is at the moment for some. We also, as was being said, offer our play schemes and that possibly could be extended because a number of providers use our premises during holiday time to offer schemes. You probably know from your own parish school.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I would like to come in there, if I may, Senator, and give consideration to why parents choose between the public and private sector. I wonder whether they believe or understand that their child will receive early years education in the public sector and receive early years care in the private sector. I wonder if you can tell us how you see the difference. Is there a difference between the quality delivered between public and private sector?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I think in the private sector they have a lot of educational benefits because the private sector have really reacted well to our early years Foundation Stage. So it is not a question of when they are in the private sector they are not receiving any educational benefits at that age at all. As was mentioned earlier, one of the things about our provided nursery classes is they tend to be purpose built and they have the back-up of the whole school round them. As for parents, I think unfortunately many parents in Jersey have to make a choice based upon their finances, as well as possibly what they would regard as the best provision for their child. I think it is a balance for some and I think for many the option of 20 hours free in a nursery class, which is 20 hours free child care whichever way you look at it because the child is being taken care of ... at present they have 30 hours a week free term time in our nursery classes and I

think that would have a big influence on a lot of people who have got financial considerations that they would go for that and somehow manage to fill in the other hours they want rather than perhaps, if they had the choice, opt for a system that would suit their child better. So I think it is a difficult choice for many parents to make.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Could I ask Ms. Thebault to comment on that, please?

Ms. Y. Thebault:

Yes. I think there has always been a little bit of rivalry between the private sector and the state sector but I think the introduction of the Foundation Stage guidance and the fact that we have had trainers coming from abroad who have always included the private sector and the state sector, I think what we have seen is a growing understanding of what it means to young children. They do not think of care and education as separate. They learn from everything they do and I think that it is really helping practitioners to have a real understanding of what children need and that it is a holistic approach and how parents are at the centre of the child's development. We have done so much work since 1983 when I started working in Jersey and we had the effective early learning research projects, we have had the baby effective learning. I think what we have been able to do is perhaps have the best training we possibly could for all early years practitioners. I think that has raised a deeper level of understanding among practitioners of the needs. For instance, primary heads who are key stage 2 trained are included in all the training and recently we had Fairlie Featherstone(?) coming and talking about social and emotional needs of very young children. One head teacher said she had not realised how important it was, even when you looked at year 6 children, what their emotional needs were. So I feel very encouraged that there is more of a dialogue now, getting away from professional rivalry to what is the needs of the children.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Just based on that, as you have started to speak about training, could you confirm to us what level of training is available at Highlands College for child care?

Ms. Y. Thebault:

You can do NVQ4^[s1] (National Vocational Qualifications) and quite a lot of the practitioners in the private sector have gone to register for the social degree. In fact, some of our practitioners in the private sector have registered for a master's in child development, which we are encouraging. In terms of the availability of higher level qualifications, I think we are doing very well because there is access through Highlands.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

As a follow-up to that, and I believe it does follow on to the training that is available within the Island, you spoke about less rivalry now between the public and private sector. A submission that we had to us stated that primary school nurseries are staffed by people who are on the same terms and conditions as schoolteachers, which I would like to ask --

Senator M.E. Vibert:

A teacher is a nursery class teacher.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

So you can confirm that a nursery class teacher is on the same terms and conditions as --

Mr. M. Lundy:

A nursery class teacher is a qualified teacher.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

On the same terms and conditions as every other qualified teacher.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

What conditions of employment do you have for the assistants who work within the public nurseries? Are they on better terms and conditions than, say, those who would be employed within the private sector?

Mr. M. Lundy:

Obviously the terms and conditions for employees in the private sector are for the individual businesses. The terms and conditions for what we call teaching assistants in the nurseries in our primary schools is the same as for teaching assistants throughout the education service. I understand that there are some nurseries that have similar pay and conditions of service for their nursery staff, others quite clearly will not, and that is an issue. If you are looking at quality, and the key issues of quality are around having a well-trained, well-qualified workforce, that can be a challenge for a business which, I suppose, has some tight margins as far as profitability is concerned. The other is around environment. You want to make sure that you have got a good stimulating environment for the youngsters to be in. It is about strengthening partnerships, I guess, between private and public sector but with parents, and it is also about developing this holistic framework. The one that we have adopted is obviously the Foundation Stage curriculum. These are all the components of driving up quality. This partnership and this policy does not espouse to change that and to drive up quality from day one. It does over a period of time create the circumstances for continuous development for higher quality and one of the things further down one would want to look at is the concept of an early years professional; how to ensure that regardless of whether somebody is working in the private sector or the public sector in Jersey that they

are appropriately qualified and appropriately trained. Now, the strategy cannot tackle that at the outset but the strategy creates the context for a partnership that would enable the private and public sector to come together and to move forward on that.

Dr. C. Hamer:

I think that is really helpful. Can I just explore, when you refer to the early years Foundation Stage what age range are we talking about there?

Ms. Y. Thebault:

Three.

Dr. C. Hamer:

So we are talking about 3 to 5 year-olds. We are not talking about birth to 3 framework?

Ms. Y. Thebault:

No.

Dr. C. Hamer:

So in terms of looking at your quality provision for your nought to 3s, what work is there around that?

Ms. Y. Thebault:

The work around there has been done by the manager of Day Care Services and she has embraced the birth to 3 framework and she has also really been very involved, as I said, in the BEEL (Baby Effective Early Learning) project. She has a doctorate herself. I think you would need to ask her the details but she has been very immersed in raising the quality of early years education and care from birth to 3. That has been her main passion and mine has been from 3 to 5.

Dr. C. Hamer:

Thank you. That is very helpful.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

We talked about quality standards and, of course, your registration process is a way that you start setting the scene for that. I understand that the staffing ratio levels are different for the private sector and the public sector.

Mr. M. Lundy:

That is correct.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

What is the reason for that?

Mr. M. Lundy:

The staffing levels for the private sector are the same as the staffing levels for the private sector in the UK. The staffing levels are slightly less in the nursery classes because the nursery classes are within the context of a school. So there is an infrastructure right around the nursery class that enables the ratios to be different. Also, I guess another issue as far as the nursery class is concerned is that they are staffed by qualified teachers.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Has it been brought to your attention that many of the private providers feel that it is discriminatory? If it has, how are you intending to address that, if at all?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Yes. We have tried to address it by explaining the reasons we have just outlined to yourself. I think more and more of the private providers are understanding that but it is an issue with some private providers, and I can understand because obviously they would like to see similar levels in both. There is a difference where you have the whole surroundings of a school and the back-up of a school with all that entails around a nursery class, as opposed to a standalone nursery, and it is an issue that, certainly with some private providers, has caused differences in the past. That is, is there a difference between a nursery-qualified at a certain level and a qualified nursery teacher? There can be differences of opinion on that and you can make all sorts of comparisons with other professions. They are different. That does not mean disparaging in any way but they are different. In a hospital you need doctors and nurses and all sorts of people. You are not saying that one is better than the other or anything; they are doing different jobs. There is the question of whether a qualified nursery teacher is doing a slightly different job to someone who is not a qualified teacher. We have teaching assistants working alongside our qualified teachers in our provided nursery classes. I recognise this is an issue with a number of the private providers and we try to explain the reasons why. Certainly we have the same ratios as the UK, I understand, for the private providers.

Dr. C. Hamer:

Can I just ask a question that really moves forward, I think, the discussion, around the concept of partnership. In your submission the key theme to me that seemed to emerge was the proposal, and hopefully the willingness, for the private sector, the public sector and parents to work in partnership. Has that been progressed in any sort of formal sense or is it still at the sort of aspirational stage?

Mr. M. Lundy:

I think it has been progressed in the formal sense in that the Department for Education Sport and Culture funds a full-time teacher advisor to the private sector at no cost to the private sector. In terms of training, that training is joint. At a strategic level probably not as much as one would hope but that is because I think the opportunity exists within this strategy because this is the first strategy that has come out and said we want to have an integrated provision for early years and we want to develop that in partnership with the private sector. I do not think the private sector themselves would be enamoured within a partnership that had been worked out and imposed upon them at the outset. So the proposal is that a partnership group would be established that would take that forward.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I have had meetings and Mario has had formal meetings and they are supportive of the structure and the proposals. We would, with them, work out the more detailed structure.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Could I just ask you a little bit about the Jersey Child Care Trust? Obviously there were 3 models put forward for its continued existence in the CAG's (Comptroller and Auditor General) report. How do you see it going forward?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

We have worked quite closely with the Jersey Child Care Trust and we see it as having a very important role but it did, I think, lose its focus for a while and I believe now is getting back much more focus, and that is comparatively recently. I think it is working very well in the areas it should be working in. They will be reporting back to us shortly on how their new refocusing is going. In the report it said they should get back to basics really, back to their thing, and I think that is what they are doing.

Mr. M. Lundy:

The opportunity obviously exists, if the strategy were to move forward, for the Jersey Child Care Trust to adjust its position and its role and perhaps to become more of a comprehensive children's information service as opposed to just a body that is focusing on early years. One of the main roles for the trust originally was to develop sponsorship, to raise funding for early years, and I think since the CAG's report they have been able to demonstrate that they have done that most effectively. So they are working in a new way and the potential exists for that to be developed even further in order to produce a more comprehensive children's information service for the Island.

Dr. C. Hamer:

I think that is very, very helpful. Can I just clarify because it seemed to me that that CAG's report looked at the options for the JCCT as a commissioner, a provider or a campaigning organisation, if I can just summarise it like that. So the preference is around which of those?

Mr. M. Lundy:

It would depend on how the strategy were to move forward and also it would depend on whether, for example, means testing were to come in as another option again, because you could consider the JCCT more as an executive arm. I think that would probably be the more likely. As a lobbyist it is difficult to maintain the role of effective lobbyist if, in effect, your funding comes from government. So I think that is not likely to be the case. So it would have to be either in an executive capacity or in a fundraising capacity as a champion for children.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I wonder if I can ask you, Minister, do you think it is acceptable that almost 4 years on from the Jenny Spratt report in which she recommended a partnership between the public and private sector we are still hearing today that consultation is due to be carried out on achieving that?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I have made proposals that would have a working partnership and unfortunately so far I have been denied the funds to put those into effect. My committee commissioned the Jenny Spratt report because of the concerns that were there. We have taken it on, we have worked with the providers and come up with a policy that is supported by the providers working together and that is what I want to pursue. I think it was 2004; it is now 2007. We have had a number of reports done, as you have seen. We wanted to get it right. We believe that what we were proposing would be in the best interests of the Island and would be in the best interests of both the public and the private sector, and my job is to convince the States that this is the case and this is something that is so important that it should be funded.

Mr. M. Lundy:

Could I ask you to clarify what further consultation you are referring to?

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

We are talking about going back to the early years strategy. We do not yet have a public-private partnership, do we, effectively delivering?

Mr. M. Lundy:

We have an early years liaison group at the moment. There was a public-private partnership group established a couple of years back when we were developing the strategy. The point I think at the moment is that without the strategy moving forward what would the partnership be doing other than talking about the issues around training, around the philosophy for early years, and the context is already set for that. That happens. So in those terms a partnership exists. It exists for training but in terms of working together to provide a coherent and cohesive strategy for early years the partnership group

would need to be established such that consultation took place on an ongoing basis for ever, in a sense, because the issues that that partnership group would be addressing would be affected by, I guess, the number of children, the capacity, future training needs, the development of an early years professional. The idea would be to establish a group that was representative of all the key stakeholders for early years and to make sure that that group was able to influence the future strategic development by providing recommendations advice to the Minister.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Is that what you are aiming to do, to form that group?

Mr. M. Lundy:

That was the proposal.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Until the strategy is approved we do not want to --

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

It is chicken and egg really: do we have the strategy or do we have something ahead of that?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I think with the private sector in particular they do not want to, what they regard as, waste their time in talking shop unless something is going to come out of it, to be blunt.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

You may be blunt, Minister.

Deputy S. Pitman:

Are there any specific areas that you feel we should consider in our review?

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Well, far be it from me to --

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

We welcome your input.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I welcome the scrutiny panel looking at the area because I regard it as an opportunity to raise the issue again to take it forward. I said I am not giving up on it and I will be continuing with it and I hope the

finding of scrutiny panel will aid me in pursuing this.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Although you do not know what our finding will be.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I said I hope. I live in hope. Areas that I think would be useful for the scrutiny panel from my point of view to look at is obviously the overall effectiveness of what we are proposing but also the issue of means testing and charging. It is quite a difficult concept, particularly with the means testing, to fully understand that it can have consequences that you do not want and do not expect, as was detailed in that report by the Day Care Trust, because superficially it seems a very attractive solution. I think it would be very helpful if the scrutiny panel looked at those areas of means testing and introducing charges because I think that would be an area that needs fuller understanding by many.

Dr. C. Hamer:

I understand entirely the research background that looks at 20 hours as being the number of hours that really has been suggested as being most beneficial for children's development. Have you pragmatically considered altering that number of hours in terms of the number of children who currently are not receiving any free nursery education? You said there were 170 children where there had been requests for additional places. My understanding is that in actual fact there are more than that number of children.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

Yes, the 170 were people who appealed, who contacted us who had not got a place and bothered, not having got that place, to get in touch with us. There are about 500 who do not have a place.

Mr. M. Lundy:

Do you mean altering the hours such that you might, for example, provide morning sessions, afternoon sessions and offer more?

Dr. C. Hamer:

Yes. I just wondered whether any consideration has been given to that.

Mr. M. Lundy:

Consideration has been given to it. In actual fact that was the position at one stage. The preference was for morning sessions and the afternoon sessions were not necessarily fully taken up. The fact that it was morning or afternoon sessions even less satisfied the requirements of parents who needed to work and, of course, by offering twice as many free places in provided nursery classes there would undoubtedly be

concern from the private sector because that would be directly affecting their business.

Dr. C. Hamer:

What I really was trying to move towards was any flexibility around that; rather than just have morning sessions or just afternoon sessions to look at, for example, 15 hours over 3 days and to work with private providers in partnership for, say, the rest of the week.

Mr. M. Lundy:

If we were in the same position that the UK are in, in terms of not having the capacity, being forced to compromise to that extent, then it is certainly something that would have formed part of the strategy but there was perceived to be a real opportunity here with full capacity, and with 50 per cent of children already accessing a free place that that was an opportunity obviously.

Ms. Y. Thebault:

Also from the experience of what nursery teachers tell us is that children benefit from long periods of self-chosen activity that they can take through and how much it has benefited children to work towards completing something towards the end of the week, even 3 year-olds, and having that experience and seeing for myself, the depth of involvement. I think that they feel that that continuity in provision really makes a huge difference to children.

Dr. C. Hamer:

Certainly my understanding is that quality and calibre is not to be compromised.

Mr. M. Lundy:

Quality has been at the forefront of everything that has been achieved to date. If you look at some of the challenges facing the Island in the future, for example in terms of its aging population, et cetera, the high cost of living, the high cost of housing, it is in a sense a real threat to young families who would want to come back to the Island being able to access up to 15 hours, or 12.5 at the moment, free in the UK and then coming back to Jersey where the cost of child care is very high.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I would like to thank you all for coming to speak to us today. I am conscious of the time, as our former chairman always used to enjoy telling people, but indeed I am conscious of the time and the fact that we do have another hearing at 11.30 a.m. We have not addressed by any means all of the questions that we have for you, which we will be doing either on 9th November or perhaps beforehand we will possibly write to you to ask for some further clarification. Minister, I hope you do not feel that you have come here and just repeated what you have already submitted to us in writing. It is important for us to get an understanding of the way you have been thinking and the processes that you have followed. In

summary, as you are aware, this is being recorded and will be transcribed and a copy of the transcriptions will be sent to you all for you to verify that in fact what it is thought you have said was in fact what you did say. That would be the only thing that we would permit any change on. Obviously content must stay as has been said. So thank you very much for coming to speak to us. It is was very nice to meet you, Ms. Thebault. We hopefully will resume on 9th November but you will let us know whether that is acceptable for you.

Senator M.E. Vibert:

I will do, and can I thank the scrutiny panel for being so courteous in their hearing. If they wish another hearing with myself and the officers I will make sure that we will be available and I will make sure we are available on 9th November. I think it is very important that you are satisfied and have asked all the questions of us you want because I regard this as a very important subject for scrutiny. As you know, I was very keen for it to be scrutinised and I welcome the fact it is being scrutinised. Thank you.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Thank you very much.