

STATES OF JERSEY

Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel Early Years Review

Friday, 19th October 2007

Panel:

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

Deputy J. Gallichan of St. Mary

Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier

Witnesses:

Mr.C. Powell (Jersey Child Care Trust)

Ms. F. Vacher (Jersey Child Care Trust)

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

I would like to welcome you both to this hearing of the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel and thank you both for coming. These microphones are for the recording system, they are not to amplify our voices so if you can speak up please but also direct your voice to the microphone for the recording. As you know, the hearing is being recorded and will be transcribed and you will have a copy sent to you for you to confirm that what is recorded as you having said you in fact did say. Can I draw your attention to the privileges that are accorded to witnesses at these hearings? There should be a copy, I believe, in front of you and I also believe you should have seen one before you arrived here today. Are you familiar with that?

Mr. C. Powell (Jersey Child Care Trust):

Yes.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Okay, so just to test the sound system, I will introduce myself. I am Deputy Mezbourian of St. Lawrence. On my left is ...

Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier:

Deputy Pitman of St. Helier.

Deputy J. Gallichan of St. Mary:

Deputy Gallichan of St. Mary.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Our officer on my right-hand side. Will you introduce yourselves, please?

Mr. C. Powell:

Yes, certainly. Thank you for inviting us along to this public hearing. We are very grateful for an opportunity to speak to you. I am Colin Powell and I am Chairman of the Jersey Child Care Trust.

Ms. F. Vacher (Jersey Child Care Trust):

I am Fiona Vacher from Jersey Child Care Trust as well.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Thank you. I believe that our officer has indicated to you that we would like you please to give a general background on the J.C.C.T (Jersey Child Care Trust) and the roles that you play within it. Our intention would be really to listen to what you have to say and to then ask questions based upon what we have heard. We have also prepared some questions that we will also ask you. I would say that perhaps when we have read the transcript if anything else occurs to us that we would like to know we would contact you again, probably in writing, if you are happy with that.

Mr. C. Powell:

Certainly. Thank you. I have just a few remarks, very much an overview, and then I will ask Fiona to tell you a little bit about what the Child Care Trust is doing at the present time, what it focuses on. But the Child Care Trust, which has been in existence now for some 10 years, was set up by the States with the intention of facilitating the provision of quality affordable childcare services throughout the Island. That is what the Jersey Child Care Trust is designed to achieve and that is what we focus our efforts on. We have a constitution which is approved through the Royal Court which sets out a whole range of objectives for us to follow and those objectives are the objectives that we have followed for the last 10 years. If one wants

to kind of find a general statement as to what the Child Care Trust is about it is about the whole question of investing in the future of the Island because investment in children from the earliest years is an investment in our future. We feel, as being supported by evidence from around the world, that the most important time to invest in children is from their earliest years. That is really where you begin to set a scene for future life, both through school, through adolescence and through into adult life. If you do not get it right in the early years then you suffer the consequences subsequently. There is plenty of evidence around the world now to show that there is considerable advantage and benefit to be obtained through spending a good deal of money on providing quality affordable childcare, which all of the residents of the Island who have children can take advantage of. Not only of benefit to the children, benefit for the families, benefit for the community at large. There is lots of evidence which shows that it improves academic performance. It enhances social skills, it reduces vandalism and social difficulties in the future. But, again, in the context of Jersey, which has some of its own needs, it also supports the ability of mothers to enjoy gainful employment and that, in itself, is not only valuable for the community at large, because it limits the number of immigrants that are needed to support the economy, but there is also plenty of evidence to show that families that have a good income and do not have money worries are in a much better position than obviously those who are faced with the stresses and strains of trying to make ends meet. So, to our mind, this is an extremely important and essential area, it is one that is recognised by the Council of Ministers in the strategic plan in principle but one where we feel that there is still a need for some more evidence of action rather than just plain words. So that is our kind of general position as to what we are seeking to do and perhaps I can ask Fiona just to give you a quick update as to the kind of particular areas that we focus on which are of direct benefit to either the community at large or particular sections of that community.

Ms. F. Vacher:

I think one of the most important things to start off with is the clear distinction between our role and daycare registration in education. Daycare registration really is fundamentally there to obviously ensure that the law is being met by all of these childcare providers if they need to be registered under the law. The Jersey Child Care Trust deals with all other aspects which generally fall within the business aspect of the

childcare settings and the childcare providers. I think it is also important to mention that some of those childcare providers are unregistered so will not come under the auspices of daycare registration, for example nannies. Some of the work that we are doing at the moment really to meet the business needs of the childcare providers are things like the annual childcare fee survey, the annual childcare staff pay and conditions survey, we have produced recently the guide to employing a nanny for parents to ensure that all the employment and legal obligations are met by the parents for nannies in Jersey. Our childcare information service covers the parents and professionals going through the website, the phones as well as drop in and the continuous professional development courses that we provide for over 1,000 places a year. Examples of current work at the moment, we are working very closely with family daycarers, they have got particular issues with social security at the moment, the contributions, so we are working very closely with them and the department to see if we can see a way forward to change some aspects of their contributions. We are running a nanny forum on a monthly basis to ensure that nannies ... the needs of nannies are met. It is a very isolating position to be in and also a position which is of incredible responsibility on a one-to-one basis with children. So we are ensuring that the quality aspects of their training is right. Obviously continuing with the nanny accreditation scheme which we are thrilled has been included in the income support system so it now takes forward hopefully that the income tax will follow as previously discussed by Terry Le Sueur and Paul Routier. So that is a really good move forward for us, which means that all our nannies who have been pending will now be accredited ready for 1st January. Would you like me to go into more depth about ... we have got a couple of other projects I have not mentioned but we have discussed it previous times, or is that necessary today?

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Would you just like to remind us of them?

Ms. F. Vacher:

Yes, okay. Things like the special needs project where we support children on a one-to-one.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

We are interested in that, yes.

Ms. F. Vacher:

Okay, well the project is co-ordinated by the trust and has ensured that training for all special needs co-ordinators, of which there are (from memory) about 26 in the sector, have all received special needs training. We then employ support workers on a one-to-one basis to work with the children following targets set by the health professionals who are involved with those children. Really the key thing about this is to ensure that these children can access mainstream childcare provision. Without this project they really would not be accessing the same learning environment as the other children would because of their particular needs. That project employs a 2-day a week part time co-ordinator who runs the whole project basically from the trust. The entire budget for that this year of £40,000 is from fundraising that we have achieved. We have got the supported places project which pays for children who would not have been attending any early years environment whatsoever before starting school in reception. That is making significant headway at the moment because of our fundraising efforts. We have raised £57,000 this year for that so we are making significant inroads for the children that have missed out on free nursery places or parents cannot afford for the nursery places. We have our foundation stage project where the teacher is employed by E.S.C (Education Sport and Culture) but contracted to us to raise the quality of the foundation stage curriculum within each nursery setting, private nursery setting. She co-ordinates a very large training prospectus for them. As well as in house she also works out house as well. She does it with parents to ensure that parents are working as partners with the staff in the nurseries. We have our grant scheme where we pay for equipment within the sector so that it is obviously keeping the affordability down for parents, not passing the costs on to parents. That is currently set at £30,000 a year. Some of that funding has come from charitable sources, some from our States grant. We are, at the moment, about to announce in the next month our finalists and winners for the Family Friendly Employer of the Year Award. We have got a breakfast booked in November where we will announce the winner. We have had some excellent examples and what we will be doing from that is taking the examples and renewing our employer's toolkit, which we had printed a few years ago, and it has certainly become out of date with practice moving on. We have got lovely examples of very small employers and very large employers as well,

which demonstrates you do not have to be this very large conglomerate to achieve good family friendly practices for your parents. Basically from the trust's perspective I see that as a real kind of key way forward by meeting the needs of working parents within their employment then we are going to be meeting the needs of those children within the childcare aspect as well, hopefully with the flexibility from employers as well as from the childcare sector.

Mr. C. Powell:

Could I just add a couple of things, if I may? As you know we have made various submissions. We made a submission to the Council of Ministers and we made a submission to the Scrutiny Panel and we also made a submission to the Treasury Minister on G.S.T. (Goods and Services Tax), on which we have been successful at in that G.S.T. now is exempting the childcare facilities, and we have made representations to the Social Security Minister in terms of income support. They were not prepared to take on all of what we wanted but fortunately the States did agree. So that was very helpful. Obviously what we are still disappointed about is that the States has not yet been persuaded to make additional funds available to get rid of the inequality that presently exists between public and private provision of childcare whereby some people are lucky enough to be able to access the free provision that is available from the Education Ministry, whereas others have to obtain that childcare from the private sector, which is good quality but it is obviously at a cost. There is no clear allocation there in a sense that those people who have greatest need, in terms of having the greatest difficulty in meeting the cost of childcare, that all end up in the public sector, a lot of them are having to call upon the private sector to obtain the childcare services that they require and therefore they are disadvantaged as a result of that. So we would have hoped that the proposal that was coming forward for provision of free childcare, out to a certain limit of number of hours and over a period of time through the year, would have been adopted by the States so we are obviously disappointed with that. We would hope that that is not a battle totally lost, or we may have lost one battle but we have not lost the war hopefully and we can still come back on that one. We, ourselves, have obviously resource constraints. There are lots of things that we would like to do. We could do more in the area of grant assistance to the private sector if we had more money. We obviously could use more money in the area of special needs and supported places. We have a fixed grant from the Ministry

of about £162,000 which is set and then what we have done is to go out to raise money from the private sector. If you go back say over the last 3 years, 2 or 3 years ago, I think it was £25,000 and this last year it was £75,000 and this year I think we will at around £100,000 in terms of funds which we have obtained from the private sector in support of our activities. So we now are making quite a contribution to grants and to supported places as a result of the generosity of companies and other organisations like the Lloyds TSB Foundation and the like, we are managing to make a greater contribution than we might otherwise be able to make. Does that give you a picture as to where we are?

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

It gives us a comprehensive picture, thank you. I wonder if now is the time that we should start asking some questions based upon what we heard this morning. I am sure we have all picked up on questions that we would like to ask you. I will start with Deputy Gallichan.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Thank you. Two things I picked up on and I would just like to clarify. When you talked about your continuing professional development you mentioned about 1,000 places a year. Can you just explain to me if that is 1,000 places for training?

Ms. F. Vacher:

Yes, minimum. It is usually about 1,200 but our baseline is 1,000. They are C.P.D. (Continuous Professional Development) courses generally run in the evening although some can be in the day but obviously the nature of childcare is they cannot access them as much in the day. We keep costs to a minimum, £7.50 a time so if you split that up basically the trust uses its grant from the E.S.C. to ... we have got administration staff so that is where the money from E.S.C. goes in and then the money which we get from the childcare sector basically pays for the employment of the teacher, the trainee. So we are sort of subsidising that as such to make sure it keeps costs at an absolute minimum. That is led by the sector. Whatever their needs are we strive to meet the needs. We have got a lot of professionals involved from lots of different areas that come and help us with that.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I wonder if I could just follow up with a specific question based on your response there. I noticed on your website that you have got Dr. Bryn Williams as a deliverer of training. Is that a free service provided by him or are you charged by Health and Social Services?

Ms. F. Vacher:

No, we pay him privately for that. I think ...

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

So that is in addition ... that is private work for him?

Ms. F. Vacher:

Yes, and that is how it works so very well, is because these people are working exceptional hours anyway and I think recognising that and paying them above and beyond, we pay them the same rate as you would receive at Highlands as an adult tutor. We like that arrangement. We find that we do not mind asking Bryn to do 2 or 3 sessions a term, which I know is onerous on him but equally it works both ways. So that is why it is successful.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Are the places taken up by people from within the private and public sector?

Ms. F. Vacher:

We give absolute priority to the private sector because that is our role and our constitutional aim, you know, childcare for the private sector. However, if there are vacancies in any course we will always open it up in order of priority, starting with those working in nursery classes in the States system and then I know that we have got several parents that have accessed it in the past as well. Then anyone else.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Just jumping a bit, I was going to ask you something else but I will move through. We did have some submissions that seemed to say that the role of the trust was

focused primarily on the public sector which obviously is in variance to what you have just told me, but can you just confirm your balance between public and private.

Ms. F. Vacher:

We do not work with the public sector at all, whatsoever.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

That clarifies that nicely.

Mr. C. Powell:

Just picking up on that one, I think we know where this view comes from in the sense, and it was something that was also touched on, I think, by Mr. Swinson in his report on the trust. That is that there is this question as to whether the trust should be a campaigning body, you know, that should be out there knocking heads together as far as Government is concerned and not, as it were, tied into Government. So Mr. Swinson had these kind of different models. He had one where we were just a campaigning body in which case we would be funded entirely privately, no kind of government grant and we would then be ... have always been in confrontation with the Ministry. The alternative model he had was that we would be, as it were, really just an agent of government and therefore almost just funded by Government to do the kind of things that we might be able to do more cheaply than Government. We take the view that, and this I think was very much the view that the States had in 1997 when they set us up, what was needed was a bridge between the public and private sectors. In other words one did not want to be, as it were, isolated from the public sector and we work closely with them in that respect, and the foundation stage, for example, is one where we work very closely with them. On the other hand we wanted to be independent in the sense that we could make our own submissions, make our own representations, and generally press the Ministry to do things that they might not otherwise do. Generally act as if we are in support of the sector in a whole host of ways which we have done through our submissions. We feel, and have felt during our existence, that that is the best place in which we should be. Now, Mr. Swinson took the view that if you ... almost providing 2 horses at the same time that you were going to fail because you could not be both, as it were, part of Government, part of the private sector that somehow one would not be doing either job effectively. Our view

has been there that he was wrong in that respect and that we can maintain that bridge and that we can serve the private sector as we do with all the support we give it, and at the same time work closely with Government so that we carry out the duties that were set for us by the States in 1997. That may change in the future and that is down to the Ministry view as to where they see their future and we have been, to some extent, waiting for the Ministry, as it were, to very clearly identify their future as far as childcare is concerned and their policy line. But I think that certainly the impression we have had in our discussions with the Minister is that they value the role that we perform. We perform a number of services which, if we did not exist, they would have to perform and I think we perform them more cheaply by the very nature of the way we operate. I think that we have an opportunity to be heard on behalf of the private sector in a way that, from my own experience over the years, one tends not to be heard so clearly if one is totally separate. If you create the image that you are something of a campaigner sometimes I have found that in the past States committees have tended to become rather defensive against that position. Whereas we feel that the way we have worked and established a relationship we are achieving more. This is an issue on which people have different views. The private sector we know because we meet with them and discuss it with them. They feel that we should be making much more noise and being out there banging the drum. We take the view that we can achieve a lot through communication, meetings and discussion, and I think the results in recent months with the G.S.T. and also with the income support - and I would hope with getting the message across that this is an investment in the future and that therefore there should be a path for childcare in the strategic plan, which is there in words and now we are looking for action, which we obtain by correspondence with the Council of Ministers - I think we have shown that we can succeed in the way that we operate.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Can I just pick up on what you said then, Mr. Powell, please, because obviously we have looked at the C.N.A.G.'s report and essentially I believe in that he proposed the 3 models and you have referred to the campaign provider and conduit or commissioner. You see yourselves as a bridge between public and private, do you see your role as incorporating perhaps all of the suggestions made by the C.N.A.G.?

Mr. C. Powell:

Yes, I think we said that to him. I think interestingly if one looked at one of the drafts of the report and then looked at the final report he did cover this point in his report in that after he had referred to his models he then said that: “Well, maybe in the context of Jersey there is a need for some kind of middle ground.” Now, he suggested that that was going to be difficult. Mainly, I think one of the points he made there which I think some of the figures I have already given you would disprove, is that he felt that if we were in the middle ground and we were reliant on some Government grant but also a good deal of private funding that we would not be able to get the private funding because people would identify us as being part of Government. We made it very clear that we are a bridge and that we cannot rely upon Government to fund us and that we need private funding for things like the special needs programme and supported places. Whereas when Mr. Swinson did his report, as I say he was looking at a situation where we had a grant of something like £200,000 plus or had had a grant of £200,000 plus and we were raising something like £25,000 from the private sector. We now have a grant of £162,000 and we are raising £100,000. So I think that we have shown that that point that he was making is not valid. We can raise money but because people do recognise us as being a useful organisation on The Bridge, as it were, we are a mixture of his models. Now, as I say, I think that he felt that it might be able to work. He suggested that maybe it would work better if we were separated into one or 2 models, either the agency of the States, which I think would be a lot more expensive for the States, or a campaigner, in which case I think we would lose some of the benefits we believe we get from being a bridge.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Can I refer to a comment you made just now, I believe you said Education Sport and Culture have to define their future and their policy. Would you just expand on what you see as E.S.C.’s current policy as regards childcare within the Island?

Mr. C. Powell:

I think one of the problems that we have, and I use the word “education” because they are obviously at the core. I think one of the problems that the Education Ministry has always faced is that they see a very clear role for themselves with the 3 years plus children because that is taking them into an education area and that is where they have

their own provision with the nurseries attached to the primary schools. I am not sure Education necessarily sees a clear role for itself in the 0-3s. Yet it is the 0-3s which are almost the most important time. So I think probably what one is saying is one is using Education because they are the Ministry that one looks to for a childcare policy but I think what we really need is a childcare policy covering from 0 plus. It was for that reason that we sent in our submission to the Council of Ministers because we felt that probably it is the Council of Ministers which brings the different Ministries together, that perhaps has the ability to produce the right policy statements in that respect. So that is where I think there was a bit of a gap at the present time.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

It is interesting that you say that you look to Education but, of course, the childcare policy for 0-5 would not just cover the educational aspects. We would also expect Health and Social Services and obviously Social Security because of income support ...

Mr. C. Powell:

Sorry, that was the point I was seeking to make, in my experience you either have a lead Ministry, obviously they have to pull in the other Ministries, but you look for a lead Ministry and the question is because of the important role that Education has to play in children of 3 onwards, should they be the lead Ministry that obviously have to pull in the others or does this become a cross border activity which has to be dealt with by the Council of Ministers. I am not in a position to really answer that question, that is more for yourselves, I think, as politicians.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

You did pre-empt my question but you have said that you cannot answer it.

Mr. C. Powell:

Well, I think it is difficult for us to say what is the ... We can identify the problem and the issues. I think it is obviously for the States to decide how best to deal with that. I can understand it could be dealt with either way, the lead Ministry route or the Council of Ministers way. But I do not think it is for us to really be able to say what the political answer is.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

If I could just clarify though, am I right in thinking that you do not believe there is a clear policy?

Mr. C. Powell:

I think that we feel that there is room for further development. Obviously there is a policy but there is room for further development, particularly, I think, identifying the value of investment. It came out ... to a degree it came out in the social policy document and I went to the St. Paul Centre where they did the presentation on the social policy and took the opportunity then again of talking about this kind of general overview approach which seemed to be well received. So I am assuming that people are working on this at the present time.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Okay, thank you. Deputy Pitman.

Deputy S. Pitman:

It is really carrying on from that a bit. What consultation has the department carried out with yourselves with regard to developing a 0-5 strategy?

Ms. F. Vacher:

Well, the initial plan was I had a call from the director asking for 10 days of my time and it eventually turned out to be one meeting of an hour at Social Security. I was quite disappointed about that to be honest.

Deputy S. Pitman:

You feel you could have usefully had a lot more input into it?

Ms. F. Vacher:

Yes, I am sure the whole group would have felt that because there was ...

Deputy S. Pitman:

With the proposed 3-4 provision, how much consultation did you get there?

Ms. F. Vacher:

With the proposed 3-4 provision?

Deputy S. Pitman:

With the proposition that that was taken to the House.

Mr. C. Powell:

Twenty hours a week.

Ms. F. Vacher:

That was the same meeting.

Mr. C. Powell:

There was a suggestion that there would be a kind of strategy steering group which would develop these things but, whether from the pressure of time and the feeling that they needed to get something out, they came under pressure and wanted to produce that just before Christmas last year, I think it came out. So I do not think that there was enough opportunity for input from that strategy group, I think is what Fiona is saying. Obviously we were very supportive of their policy, in our submissions we have supported it and we feel it is a useful policy but, again, it is the 3-4 year-olds and it still leaves the issue of the 0-3s that still needs to be addressed. So I think we feel that there are elements there, there are bits and pieces which are very positive. I think what is needed is for the whole question of childcare to be given much more political focus.

Deputy S. Pitman:

What would your ideal strategy be?

Mr. C. Powell:

The ideal strategy is really to achieve what our basic aim is. That is to ensure that there is, in the Island, sufficient childcare facilities available for all to enjoy. That those facilities are of a high quality and that they are affordable. In other words, people are not denied access to those facilities through an inability to pay. There is a

danger, which we referred to in our submissions, that against the background of the cost that people are using unregulated childcare arrangements which is not good for the children. There was an interesting piece of research done in the U.K. (United Kingdom) just recently where they were talking about the high proportion of children who are reaching school age of 5 who cannot put a sentence together, cannot really communicate because basically all that happens to them is that they are put in a room with a television and given a D.V.D. (Digital Versatile Disc) to put on and just sit there and watch it. There is no communication, no discussion, no contact, no attachment. That, I think, is what tends to happen in many of these places which are unregulated, is that people are looking after children but they are taking the easy way out of just taking that course. So to bring children into an environment where they do learn and learn to adopt communication skills is very important. So our strategy is to achieve that. Is to achieve a better programme for early years development of children. I do not know, Fiona, whether you would like to say anything more about that?

Ms. F. Vacher:

Yes, I fully agree and I think that the whole reason why those situations happen is because people are taking in so many children that that is all they can do is put them in unsavoury conditions.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

We did have some suggestions made to us that the inequity could be removed immediately if the target was set for 15 hours per week and there were enough places to consider having 30 hours and double up the number of part time places. How do you feel about that? Do you think that would address the problem in any way or do you think it would make matters worse?

Ms. F. Vacher:

In terms of best outcomes for children, the EPPE (Effective Provision of Pre-school Education) P.P.I. project says 15 hours a week is all you would need to meet the needs of children basically. But then we are concerned obviously with the working parents as well, and the aspects there. So if you are looking at the 15 hours I think we need to have a broader view of what would happen for the rest of those days because

the difficulty we have got at the moment with our free nursery places is the fragmentation of the children's day, it can be 3 different positions in one day from a morning childminder to a different afternoon childminder and your nursery class and the cost to working parents could be a lot dearer.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

We would like to speak to you about the fact that you are working with, or are dealing with, parents who go out to work but you are also dealing with them as needing provision of childcare and you are dealing with those people who provide the childcare, so you are dealing with a business or businesses and with employees. I would like you to give us some background on the liaison and links that you have with the Economic Development Department.

Mr. C. Powell:

In terms of ...?

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

In terms of their responsibility towards small businesses or any business and also their responsibilities towards employers and the needs of employers which must, of course, revolve around the needs of their employees.

Ms. F. Vacher:

I was just going to mention about T.E.P. (Training and Employment Partnership). We had a very close working relationship with T.E.P. My history with the trust goes back 5 years, so let us say from 5 years previous it was a very close relationship and we used to have T.E.P. representation on any many of our bodies which then had good communication with the sector, with Economic Development, and we could also access grants for qualifications which were not essential to meeting the requirements of the law. So desirable qualifications but if you were not in that position to do the qualification you could go up to that position. So we had a nice clear way forward for the sector. Financially these qualifications are astronomical some of them. The management one is nearly £5,000 now I understand. The qualifications grants were withdrawn by Economic Development, I think, about 2 years ago and that, I am sure, would have had a significant effect on ... well, from our perspective as a little business

it has had a significant effect on our training financially and I am sure for all the nurseries as well it will be the same.

Mr. C. Powell:

I think in terms of the general position with the Economic Development, clearly as part of the Council of Ministers, they are aware of our submissions and we would have raised the important kind of economic issues that relate to childcare and particularly in terms of women being available to employers in terms of work over a full day or part time, depending on the circumstances. I think with the Family Friendly Employers Award, which Fiona was talking about, we hope to bring a lot more focus and publicity to the importance of employers working with those women who they employ who have children and recognising the demands that are placed upon those women.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Sorry, to interrupt you, Mr. Powell, was that your initiative?

Mr. C. Powell:

Yes.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

But it is something that you would regard as perhaps being something that should be supported by E.D.D. (Economic Development Department) and to come back to the original questions, did you have any liaison with them or have you done it all on your own, have they given you any advice, any support, because we are talking about employers?

Ms. F. Vacher:

I think to be fair to Economic Development we have done it all on our own and thinking about it now it would have been a great opportunity to have introduced them to the awards. I think it is a really key partnership that could happen, yes.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

It seems to us that from the outside looking in that employees need to know that there are the facilities there for their childcare when they go back to work. We spoke to the Minister for E.D.D. earlier this week and interestingly one of the officers who came with him, I believe, used to be involved in the TEP ...

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Business growth and development, Mr. Pritchard.

Mr. C. Powell:

Yes, sure.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

He is business growth and development officer or director or something, and I wondered whether he approached you at all to discuss the growth of provision of private nurseries over here?

Mr. C. Powell:

No, they have not. I agree with you, I think that there is something there that could be developed and certainly we can involve them more in the employer awards. But I think as far as the employees are concerned at the moment they are being obviously identified as parents and therefore they are coming forward to get the benefit of the information we have available as parents. But it would be useful to involve employers in that process as well, I agree.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Just one more question on the provision of childcare, is there a requirement for growth within the private sector? Is there sufficient capacity, should there be more capacity?

Ms. F. Vacher:

In terms of 3-5 year-olds at the moment we have got a blip in the birth rate so this year we have got 100 extra children so the private sector are doing exceptionally well at the moment and at this time of year usually we would be suffering difficulties with vacancies and they are not, so that is the blip. So next year we will be back to

difficulties. In your 0-2 year-olds, your babies, there is always substantial need for those spaces. We have just had a new nursery open ... well, Rainbow Tots at Beaumont opened with 26 new baby nursery places a year ago and they filled them within 2 months. That was then staggering it rather than ... and then we have had another baby nursery open up at the animal shelter and I know that they are doing quite well with their numbers already now, so I think that baby nursery places are ...

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Presumably the difficulty there is the cost for staffing, et cetera, is so much higher in that centre.

Ms. F. Vacher:

Yes.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Is that a real problem for the industry?

Ms. F. Vacher:

It is because it is a 1:3 ratio which is ... speaking to the childcare providers they sort of say 2 babies pay just about your staff and then you have got all the rest of the overheads on that third baby, so profit is very minimal. It would be ... sorry.

Mr. C. Powell:

No, I was going to say that that is a problem that has been aggravated by the division between the public and private sector in respect of the 3 and 4 year-olds because if you take the 3 and 4 year-olds away from the private sector then you are leaving them with the much heavier burden of dealing with the 0-3s. So there is then a potential problem of maintaining provision. Or alternatively the costs are so high the only people that can really afford to take up the 0-3s ... are those with reasonable incomes, other than those that we can help and support. So I think there is an interaction which I think the private sector is showing signs of but we have lost one or two who were dealing with 0-3s and they have stopped because they could not meet the cost, because they could not charge what is necessary to meet the cost.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

So it is possibly fair to say then that it is a result of a policy that there has been an imbalance in the structure of the nursery private enterprise themselves because they have taken away the profit making element in some cases?

Mr. C. Powell:

Well, it comes back to the point I was making earlier that this is where, when we talk about strategy and the need for a policy, it is a co-ordinated policy that we are really saying. There are policy elements around but what you need is a more co-ordinated policy where you are looking at investment in children from the earliest years, so from 0, and then producing the answer which is best suited to the need rather than perhaps coming at it from the other end and say: “Well, we have got 5 year-olds going to primary school and there is a need for nursery schools so we will provide for the 3 and 4 year-olds” and then if you are not careful the 0-3s are getting left out. So it comes back to the point we were making earlier about a co-ordinated comprehensive policy applying to all children.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Thank you. I would like to just come back, if I may, to what you said, Ms. Vacher, about the nurseries that are now offering 0-3, I could not quite make out whether they are new nurseries that have opened or whether they are now offering that as a new service.

Ms. F. Vacher:

The first one that I referred to that filled 26 places within 2 months was previously a nursery, did not have that many baby places, it had less baby places, and closed because of financial difficulties. It was taken over by another provider and they have managed to make it work.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

What I would like to know is the support given by E.D.D. to new providers when they start up and whether you think there is enough support, enough guidance, whether providers come to you initially as first point of contact or whether they are aware that they could or should be going to E.D.D.?

Ms. F. Vacher:

I have, in the past, had people coming to me for advice on setting up a nursery and the places that I would point them to would be the daycare registration, looking at those aspects of the law. In terms of the business, I was not aware of this role within E.D.D. and that is perhaps my lack of knowledge there knowing that that could have supported them. So I have never signposted people on to them.

Mr. C. Powell:

But in terms of the financial support that they require when they are starting up, if you take the one at Beaumont which Fiona was referring to, they had a need for relatively significant sums of money in relation to the money we have available for grants. So they came to us and we gave them the maximum grant that we can almost give, we gave them as much money as we could to help them get off the ground. So if someone is starting up a new nursery they would invariably knock on our door for grant assistance. The amount of money that we make available through grants is limited by the total funds at our disposal and we are hoping that with more funds coming in from the private sector that we will be able to make somewhat more money available for grants to the sector than has been possible in the past. As far as I am aware, they would not get financial assistance from anybody other than us, unless they go into some charity. I do not think the Education Department has any funds available.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I was not looking at the financial assistance, it is just how easy it is for a provider to set up over here. How much red tape they have to go through, what guidance and assistance they are given with starting up a business which could potentially, by providing additional childcare, allow parents of the local work force to get back into employment. Mr. Powell mentioned earlier about the more we have going back from the local sector for some roles, the fewer people we have to bring in from outside. It is such a broad picture.

Ms. F. Vacher:

There is a lot of advice for setting up with regards to the law but I would say that in terms of the business I think that is definitely a gap where joining up with E.D.D. would be certainly meeting the needs of the business side of it.

Mr. C. Powell:

I do not know whether any of them go along to the Jersey Business Venture which is there for start up people and whether they get any advice from that. I am not aware of that. Picking up on your theme, as you know, one of issues we have picked up on in our submission, and which the private sector has touched on as well and it came up in one of your hearings, is this question of the different staff child ratio for the private sector than for the public sector, which I know is a bone of contention.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Yes, we have asked some specific questions on that and it is an area we are looking at but we understand it is the regulations that place the difference on the 2 sectors.

Ms. F. Vacher:

Could I just mention there from the childcare provider's perspective, they feel that the ratios are accurate within the private sector and would not like to see them increase. They think the 1:8 is essentially right and down the line. But it is the inequity that is difficult within training as well. I mean every single person needs first aid at £85 each within the private sector and one within the school. So it is those kind of things that could work in partnership.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

We have read an awful lot of background information to this and it is quite clear there have been a lot of consultants who have given their views, most of them of course not from within Jersey itself. Now, Mr. Powell, in your introduction you mentioned specifically that Jersey has its own needs. We have talked about the working mothers and the economic aspect, the migration aspect, is there anything else we should consider from a specific Jersey point of view when we are looking at this?

Mr. C. Powell:

Well, probably the other needs are needs which you find in other communities as well. I think that it is primarily because at the moment we have a very high female activity rate, in other words a high proportion of the number of females of working age who are in work, and that has been essential to maintain the economy. I think that as those women have had their children then if one is going to maintain that position and keep them in employment then you need childcare. I think the other aspect which is a little bit, you might say, different for Jersey is the very substantial costs that are incurred in Jersey in terms of housing. Which means that not only do we have an economic requirement, in the sense to restrict immigration, of having a high proportion of married woman in work but an awful lot of families find it essential that both the parents are in work because that is the only way in which they can meet the cost of accommodation in Jersey. So to provide for those people, again, there is a need to have childcare facilities available so that the mother can work and bring in an income. Again, I think you can see the knock on benefits of that in that again evidence elsewhere shows that children in poor housing accommodation, inadequate housing accommodation is another stress and strain on the family and on the children, so that if a family is able to work, earn enough money to get better housing accommodation, improve the facilities for the children there are benefits there. In Jersey, because of the high cost of housing it is every necessary for mothers to be in work.

Ms. F. Vacher:

I think as well as that - and I do not have statistics and I wonder who would - we have an amount of people that are working over here in the Island who do not have extended family, a lot of people who have come in here. So we have got less informal care going on here, I would say.

Mr. C. Powell:

Yes, that is a very important point. I can speak from personal experience on that in the sense that I came to the Island a long, long time ago when I had 3 small children, without any family and one of the things that I ... it is not quite the same but one of the things I had to face was I had to spend an enormous amount of money on babysitting because I just did not have a family to whom I could refer to. So on the basis of my job where you had to go out a lot then it was a burden. So it is just an

extension of that in that with people coming to work here who do not have extended families here then they do need those childcare facilities to be able to help them.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

If we can just pick up on that. Of course those people without an extended family who need childcare facilities should surely be supported by their employers and one representation made to us earlier this week was that the onus for childcare is still very much on the parent rather than being almost a partnership with the employer. I wonder whether you have ... again, I keep coming back to the employers, do you have any liaison with them to encourage flexible working hours, shared working, and things like that?

Ms. F. Vacher:

Our initial project for that started quite a few years ago on the employer's toolkit which was released. That gave good examples of those sorts of things. Again, as I say, we are going to be updating that. We have worked with some ... first of all we have worked with the C.I.P.D. (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development), which is the H.R. (human resource) professionals network, and we go through that network to communicate with as many H.R. professionals as possible because we think that is probably one of the best ways into the larger companies particularly. The Family Friendly Employer Award is raising it rather than the naming and shaming aspect, looking to the positive. We have worked with a number of employers, larger employers, advising them on how they can support their staff through childcare, voucher schemes, some of them offer very narrow choices, whether you are looking at just nursery care, and we have tried to encourage them to look widely so that parents have got a choice of childcare, you are looking at your family daycarers and nannies as well. So we have had that kind of consultation service for them.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Again, I wonder whether it is something that could be supported through E.D.D. The fact that we know that there are all these options, people working from home and things such as that, to almost mobilise the local workforce who may be out there, parents, and not just mothers of course, parents who may be out there at the moment looking after families who want to get back into the work place.

Mr. C. Powell:

Yes, I am not sure just who has the prime responsibility in this area in the sense that ... clearly this ability to get people into the workforce is mentioned in the population and immigration policy documents. Is that something that is E.D.D. or is it the population office, whatever it is called now? Does that have a role in terms of promoting that aspect? I am not sure who has prime responsibility. But you are right in that if it is important and, when he was challenged a year or so back about the impact of the economic growth policy on immigration - it had been suggested to the Chief Minister that if they were going for 2 per cent real growth this was going to generate demand for immigration-he, made great play of the fact that it would not happen because we were going to use the existing workforce effectively. So that does require action in all these areas, whether it be mothers who would like to work and who need childcare support to achieve that or other avenues, but I think again, it comes back to we have identified the problem, we have identified the issue, but who in Government is doing something about it, and who should? I mean, I am not sure who is the responsible body; is it the E.D.D., is it the Population Office, is it the Council of Ministers? I think those that are outside - even those of us who have had some experience of being inside - have some difficulty in finding a clear line.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Yes, it comes back to this overall strategy. I think we are asking ourselves the questions that you have just mentioned.

Deputy S. Pitman:

I do not know if you have already asked; what do you see your future role is for this?

Mr. C. Powell:

We see our future role as really to carry on doing what we are doing, but hopefully with some more resource, some more financial resource, so we can do a number of things more comprehensively and better, and against a framework of a co-ordinated policy, so we are operating within that framework. But I think in terms of continuing to act as a bridge between the public and private sectors, to carry out the aim of, as it says: "To co-ordinate, promote and facilitate the expansion of high-quality and

affordable childcare provision in the Island.” We see that still as being a very necessary task and we feel that the Child Care Trust is well placed to perform that task.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

If I may just draw your attention to the time, we did allow you an hour, but if you are able to stay a little longer, we do have some further questions, if we may.

Mr. C. Powell:

Yes, fine.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Thank you very much. We have heard a lot about the public/private partnership, and our understanding is that if the Minister’s policy of all 3 and 4 year-olds getting 23 hours a week goes ahead, we wonder how you would see the impact, how it would work, this partnership in provision?

Ms. F. Vacher:

I think one of the key things that we have put forward in our submission is that questions have been raised about how would you measure a quality environment to then be enabling them to receive these vouchers or the funding for this provision. I think that one of the things that we felt was that, really, we need to look at what is already existing through daycare registration, and really assess that comprehensive registration process that they already have in place - that I know is very vigorous - to make sure that as a Scrutiny Panel and then as Education, you are fully satisfied that that is in place and then consider what could be on top of that. I know through the document, the 0-5 policy document basically from Education, it sort of talks about perhaps bringing somebody else in or bringing in a further quality check and we would really like to see what is already existing there.

Mr. C. Powell:

I think if we had that policy adopted, it would make a tremendous difference, in the sense of enhancing the ability of the private sector to meet need. There is still extra provision to be made outside those hours in respect of older children, but certainly, I

think the private sector would benefit greatly. There are circumstances where the private sector has, again, a particular role to play in that there can be a situation where the mother is very comfortable with the idea of the child going to a nursery, which is attached to the primary school that they are going to go to, which means it is going to be pretty close to where they live, because that is the basis upon which they get the place in the school. But there are lots of mothers working in St. Helier who prefer to have their child in a nursery close to where they work, so you need a mixture of facilities. So the private sector is the sector that really provides for that, and again, bridges that gap. Not everybody finds it convenient to have their child in a nursery right next to their home.

Ms. F. Vacher:

Particularly then meeting the needs of the working parents, you have this, the full day in one place.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

If this public/private partnership were to go ahead, and it has been mooted for a long time of course, how would you see your role?

Ms. F. Vacher:

I would see us more as advisory in terms of that. I mean, we have administration, so if it was that, then obviously the trust is well positioned to help achieve the placements or achieve the administration of it, but we are always concerned with the business of it rather than the regulation aspect of it, so if there was anything within that, then we are in a very good position to do that.

Mr. C. Powell:

I think that there are various elements of our services which would not change with that. Clearly, if this provision that the Education Ministry is striving for is to be adopted and the money was to be available, then the pressure would be taken off the supported places in respect of the 3 and 4 year-olds, but we are still left with the 0-3s, which are not covered by the proposal. There are things like the special needs project, which will go on, and would not be covered. That is still there. There is the whole question of the training and development which Fiona was referring to, which would

continue, and the information and advice to parents. So there is a whole host of services that we provide, and insofar as the ability of the private sector to survive, as it were, with that payment, the private sector will still have a need for investment in equipment and will be still looking to us for grant aiding; I am sure it will not belie that requirement. Essentially, what we are talking about when we talk about the proposal for the 3 and 4 year-olds of the 20 hours, 38 weeks, is really the survival of the private sector. It is not, as it were, a brave new world of suddenly they are going to be in receipt of so much money that they can do what they want to do without the need of some kind of grant assistance for improving the structure or improving the equipment that they have.

Ms. F. Vacher:

I would see that role that I mentioned before, in addition to the usual business of the trust, and I would see the main change being just that when you have this mass exodus of children going into a free nursery place in the summer, that perhaps that would be lessened by parents being able to choose between which provision would suit their needs the best.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

If you do not mind, we will just double-check now that we have not missed any questions, because it is important that you have the opportunity to answer them. I wonder if I can let Deputy Gallichan just review the pre-prepared questions that you had for us all and if I can come back to some of the questions that were raised for me during the presentation that you both gave earlier. You mentioned the Social Security issues, that was Ms. Vacher, and the difficulties with contributions with daycarers. I noted that you have a Social Security member on your board, and I wondered whether you derived any benefit from having someone like that, inasmuch as you know who to contact, in any behind the scenes working done.

Ms. F. Vacher:

Our trustee's role is health and safety within Social Security, yes, and he has been with us probably since January, I think, and I think the most useful role that I have found from him is that he is actively a trustee, and he wants to be able to help. So he is very interested in the issues, so he has immersed himself in any accreditation issues

that we have had, when we had difficulties. I have worked very closely with Sue Duhamel at Social Security and that has been a really good partnership, but she is run off her feet, so when we have had difficulties communicating or getting hold of her, he has been extremely useful in senior management meetings to raise the issue there again and say: “Oh, by the way...” and things have been dealt with particularly on accreditation. The most recent one with family daycare he is not aware of yet, because we have been working with David Rose, who is our Customer Services Director, so I think now we will see how David has been moving things forward and then perhaps refer to the trustee again.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Just as we are speaking about Social Security, do you see any impact upon yourself with the changeover to the income support system?

Ms. F. Vacher:

We will have a significant impact, because we currently administer the school-age discount scheme, which is for parents of school-age children in after school clubs and holiday clubs. That should have been moving over quite a while ago and we are waiting now for when that will happen, so we will lose £10,000 administration income on that, but then equally, we will lose that chunk of work as well, which we are planning for and we have already sorted that within the team.

Mr. C. Powell:

We have taken advantage of that, to some extent, to make changes to our own administration, but we have been conscious of the need to keep our costs under control, and that was one of the things that the Minister was always very keen on seeing that we were doing. We have pared back our operations so that our costs have been contained, so that we have been able to work within the grant that we get from the Ministry and then, to a certain extent, all the private funding that we are getting is really going in, as it were, into positive ... directly into areas like special needs and supported places. It is not going into administration costs.

Ms. F. Vacher:

That is absolutely right, yes.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Again, I noticed that your trustees are people with quite varied skills and abilities, and you have someone, for instance, from Health and Social Services, and also a lady who works for Family Nursing and Homecare. So is she on your board because she was a former practitioner of childcare, or is it in connection with the job that she does now? Do you have a connection with Family Nursing?

Ms. F. Vacher:

We do, in that I sit on one of their organisations, the Child Accident Prevention, we are a member of that on the strategic board. That trustee was originally chosen because of her practitioner background and she continues to be a practitioner within primary nursing, she is one of their nursery nurses, and works closely with the trust through The Bridge, and runs several projects through The Bridge. So it is quite a close working relationship.

Mr. C. Powell:

Just picking up on that point about the trustees, as you know, under our constitution, we have the 3 requirements, which is Education and Social Security and Health, and that reflected what we were saying a little while ago about the fact that there is different parts of Government that are involved. Therefore, the whole point behind the trust being formed in 1997 was because again, there was a number of committees involved, and they felt the need for a kind of a bridge to deal with matters, and so the trust was established. But because they wanted to maintain some element of control or input, then it was agreed that they would have a trustee on it, but not a Member of the States. They were appointed as individuals. But then we have added in recent times to the number of independent trustees, and there we seek to have as broad a range as possible. We have one trustee that is communications orientated, because this is very much getting the message out, so we have someone there who has communication skills. We have, as I say, someone who is a family nursing experience. We have someone from the private sector, as it were, a kind of parent representative. So we have tried to keep a spread, to try and get that multi-discipline.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

If I may just carry on with a few questions that I identified as you were speaking earlier of the special needs co-ordinators and children with special needs, and I wonder whether those who have English as a second language come under that umbrella?

Ms. F. Vacher:

They would not come under that umbrella, because any child on the special needs inclusion project has to have 2 health professionals involved, and they would not usually - unless there are additional needs - just for language. What they would be able to access would be the supported places project, because if these children were not accessing a nursery environment, then that would deal with English as a second language without the need for a one-to-one worker. Practitioners would say that there is no need for a one-to-one worker if English is your second language, that once they are immersed within an English nursery, that very, very quickly, they pick up the English language, and it is not a difficulty then when they start school. The problem is if they do not access any environment whatsoever before school, formal schooling.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Can I ask about the Polish workforce that we have here now, and how they have impacted then upon the services that you deliver, particularly with regards to English as a second language, and how you reach them?

Ms. F. Vacher:

We ran several focus groups earlier on in the year with the Polish population. We found them very non-randomly. We went to speak to a chap from St. Mary's or St. Peter's, Nick France, and he put me in touch with one parent, who then started the network flowing and we had a lovely sort of group of 12 parents come and sit round the board table and told us what it was like to live here as a Polish parent. Some significant issues came out, and one of them is that a grand proportion of them are bringing their parents over, who do not speak any English - the grandparents, as such - to care for the children in very small environments, sort of one-bedroom places, and they are all living within that one environment.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

They are bringing their own extended family?

Ms. F. Vacher:

The extended family over, who are very isolated as well, and then the other option that they were finding was: "If you would just give us a room, we would sort our own childcare out." So I am fully aware there is Polish children within our childcare system, because I hear all the issues there as well, but they are very interested in setting up informal childcare where they could have some of their Polish people looking after the children and the rest of them working; obviously illegal over here, so...

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Yes, I was just going to state, an unregulated childcare position.

Ms. F. Vacher:

That is right, yes.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Thank you. Does anyone want to pick up on that?

Deputy S. Pitman:

One of our written questions on page 7 of the Comptroller and Auditor-General 2006, reference is made: "Partnership agreement with E.S.C." What does this entail?

Mr. C. Powell:

Our partnership in terms that we had with them, yes.

Ms. F. Vacher:

As our funding body, really. It sets dates and working relationship, really how often we would meet through the year; when we would expect to hear with reference to our grant for the next year; when we would expect to give them our business plan for the following year.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Just administrative?

Ms. F. Vacher:

Yes, and final accounts and that kind of thing.

Mr. C. Powell:

Yes, as I say, I think it was something that was taken on board generally within the States, that is that every grant-aided body should have a formal partnership agreement with the grant provider. That sets responsibilities on us, like production of an annual report, as one example. It also puts some responsibilities on them in the sense that they will make the grant available to us early in the year, and it is a kind of administrative partnership where we tell them what we pledge to do and they tell us what they pledge to do for us, and hopefully we work very cogently together. But it is something that I think all grant-aided bodies in the States are supposed to have.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Deputy Gallichan?

The Deputy of St. Mary:

The last was just a clarification point, really. When we met last, you told us a little bit about the staff bank and why it stopped. Would you just reconfirm that for me, please?

Ms. F. Vacher:

Yes. It started up in about 2002, I think, because in the private sector, they have difficulties when staff members were all sick or on holidays to meet the requirements of the law with ratios of staff to children. In consultation with the private sector, the trust undertook the role of setting up the staff bank of qualified and unqualified - but experienced - practitioners to go and work, sometimes very last-minute phone calls in the morning, for people that had phoned in sick. It was a very useful recruitment tool as well for the sector, because once someone found a very decent member of staff and had a vacancy, they were snapped up, so we had a very fast turnover of the staff bank. But we did see our role in that as being just as valuable, to make sure quality members of staff were in the workforce. It stopped because a lot of the staff were not available

on the list, because they were booked up for weeks at a time. When we had a rule of 3 weeks' maximum, a lot of them were being booked for those 3 weeks; they were very difficult to get hold of. A lot of the nurseries had told us that they had their own staff bank members that they could call on, perhaps other parents and other staff members that just wanted occasional work, and the people on the staff bank were not getting as much work as they would have liked.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

It just died a natural death then, did it?

Ms. F. Vacher:

Yes. We did have a very big meeting to discuss it with the members and with the sector and the upshot was, yes, not to.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

You have triggered something in my mind then: you mentioned, in that respect, having had private sector consultation. Generally speaking, do you have a good relationship with other bodies? What are the organisations? There is J.E.Y.A. (Jersey Early Years Association).

Deputy S. Pitman:

The Parents' Action Group.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

Yes, the Parents' Action Group.

Ms. F. Vacher:

J.E.Y.A., basically all of the members of the early years sector are members. Their chair is Val Payne, and we have a very good communication, myself and Val, through email, through phone, through meetings, and that is quite a frequent and very positive communication. She is chair of a body of very different individuals who all have very different ideas and I know that is a struggle for J.E.Y.A. sometimes to co-ordinate those ideas, and if you spoke to different members of J.E.Y.A., you might have different responses as to the relationship with the trust and J.E.Y.A.. But I am

confident that with the chair particularly we have a very good, close working relationship.

Mr. C. Powell:

She approached us recently and she explained that she thought we ought to get together.

Ms. F. Vacher:

Yes, with regards to the 3 to 4 year-olds, she would really like us to be quite collaborative on that one and push it forward, and there is more strength with the 2 organisations working together.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Do you see it as your role to co-ordinate or liase with these other outside agencies, as it were, such as the Parents' Action Group? Because I know again, you have a trustee who is a member of the Parents' Action Group.

Ms. F. Vacher:

Yes. This is in our constitution as well, that it is a co-ordinating role that we do have, so yes, definitely.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Just one more question from me, if I may: again, I spoke to Mr. Powell earlier this morning and was complimenting him on your website, because I found it particularly user-friendly for someone who is not that good on I.T. (information technology) matters.

Ms. F. Vacher:

That is nice to hear.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

I was able to navigate it particularly well, but I noted on there that there was reference to the Pathways Project, which I know as N.S.P.C.C., but I am also aware through the media this week that they are promoting a parenting week, and there was nothing on

the website about that. I wonder whether there is any co-ordination between the 2 of you over this?

Ms. F. Vacher:

Not on parenting week. Really, I mean, in terms of parents, I see our role very much more so with the working parents, and the parenting week is a quite a generic sort of celebration of parents. The Parenting Department, who work with us at The Bridge, have a very significant role to play within that, and The Bridge have teamed up with them, and I just felt really we needed to take a back step from that, in that there are better services to celebrate parents.

Mr. C. Powell:

There is a separate area in that at the present time, there is a study going on on parenting. I am chairing a group, a parenting group, which brought the professionals together, which is producing a report for the Children's Executive on parenting services and the need to co-ordinate parenting services. Pathways, but also The Bridge, are very good examples of where it works. I think what is coming out of that exercise is that there is great value in the interplay between the different services, so that is why the fact the Child Care Trust is in The Bridge is very valuable. When we kind of set out on our own, we did not get the same interaction with other services. So you have the parenting services with Trish Tumelty, and you have other services, the health visitors calling and the midwives are all there in The Bridge, so that is working very well. Pathways is producing a similar kind of combination, and I think that is certainly something for the future, that I think we probably need one or 2 more providing that kind of omnibus range of services, because you get lots of interaction with Pathways, which I am also involved with, because I am involved with the N.S.P.C.C. (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children). You get a drop in centre, so the parents come in, drop in just to spend some time with their children, and then they learn about parenting services and then they go off and perhaps enjoy that. Where if you said to someone: "I think you need a parenting service" they might come up with: "No, I do not" but if they come in to a environment where they hear other people talking and hear about the services, then they can hear about the childcare services and the support services, special needs and various other things. So it is very much working in that co-ordinated way within those centres is

very valuable. That is, to some extent, where parenting is linked, we are linked to it, but it is part of a range of a services.

The Deputy of St. Mary:

This is what happens, we prepare ourselves and this is much more interesting.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

If I could pick up on a simple question here: it just seems to me your website is so informative. Has there ever been a suggestion of a link to it from the Education website?

Ms. F. Vacher:

There is.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

There is a link there, is there?

Ms. F. Vacher:

Yes, there is a link from Education and there is a link from us. It is all through the Daycare Registration Department.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Oh, I have seen the link to the daycare registration. I had not picked up that you could link through to you.

Ms. F. Vacher:

Yes, there is one.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Oh, that is fine. Good. Is there anything else that you would like to add to us that you think maybe we have missed or we should have in?

Mr. C. Powell:

No, I think we have covered the ground. I think obviously what we are hoping is that as a result of your labours that we are going to get to the strategy that we would like to see and we will see a co-ordinated comprehensive childcare policy.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Well, you know that there have been many reports produced over the years on childcare within the Island, and we certainly do not intend that this report is just another one that goes on the shelf and is forgotten.

Mr. C. Powell:

Well, I think in that context, the point I would finally make would be one that we made in the submission and one that I made at the social policy presentation, and that is we recognise that there are limited funds available to the States, so it is a question of priorities, and really, our view - and I think the view of other communities - is that there is always no higher priority than dealing adequately and effectively with children from year 0, both the children and as parents. With the parenting group, just as example of what we are saying there is that one of the things one has been talking about is to try and get in a situation where, at the moment, every mother who is about to have a baby thinks in terms of: "I want to go to antenatal classes" but they also want to get to a situation where every mother, when she has the baby, thinks: "Well, I ought to go to parenting classes" or: "I ought to have contact someone and just get some benefit from that." I think it is that kind of comprehensive approach which is going to pay dividends in the future.

Deputy D.W. Mezbourian:

Thank you very much.

Mr. C. Powell:

Thank you for receiving us.