

Hello,

I'd like to make a few points about the proposed cuts to NEF funding.

The Ed dept. several years ago invited the esteemed academic John Abbott to the island to give a key-note speech to its education conference where he explained the importance of investment in early years. All research conducted on early years education points to the fact that play is good for children. Not every parent is good at play. Not every parent has the time, space and resources to provide a range of sensory and social play experiences for their child every day. The NEF made play possible for all children, regardless of who or what their parents were.

The proposed cuts are set to discriminate against children of so-called 'wealthy' parents. How can the Minister propose a system that is prejudiced against some children? It is, after all, children who will miss out because of this, not adults.

I am one of the 'wealthy'. We have a joint income of about £75,000. We have £36,000 per year mortgage. After tax, that leaves £24,000 or £2000 per month to pay for everything else. We have 3 children to feed, keep warm and clothe. I'm sure there are people worse off but we are not 'wealthy' in the least. After bills and household necessities we're scraping by; we're trying to make ends meet with no holidays and no luxuries. We certainly can't afford private nursery care and we have no family here which means that I will not be able to work for yet another year.

Of course I will ensure that my child experiences a range of activities and social events but I can guarantee they won't be half as good as what goes on at the amazing school nursery my first born attended.

I feel really sad that I won't be able to provide my new son with the opportunity, for a few hours a day, to spend some time away from me, gently acclimatising to the rigours of school and systems that he will be expected to fit into in Reception. I feel sad that having working ridiculously hard for years to enable us to have a family we are now being penalised because we worked a bit too hard and did just that tiny bit too well to now be able to access the support that our little one will need from the taxes that we pay.

Finally, in support of a systemic rethink, I think there were real issues with the way NEF was distributed. Before we were in a position for me to stop work, both of our children attended Organic Kids nursery. This nursery claimed the NEF funding for each eligible child but only passed on 80% of the funding, keeping the rest as profit. They justified this by saying that we received 20 free hours, which was true. However, because we were signed up for 55 hours per week the hourly rate was approx £4.15 per hour. Therefore, this is what they deducted from our bill yet they claimed £5.15 per hour from the states. When I asked if they returned the excess £1 per hour, per child (potentially about £800 per month) to the States they refused to answer and ended up shutting down all communication with me. At the time I was told by Education that OK were exploiting a legal loophole and there was nothing they could do.

So yes, rethink how the system works so that UK companies are not creaming off the subsidy but please don't deny any child the opportunity to begin education in one of the fantastic school nurseries we have here in Jersey.