

Dear Deputy Catherine Curtis,

I write in response to your letter dated 11th February 2025 containing the transcript recording of the Public Hearing with the Minister for Education on 30th January 2025.

It is clear to the JEYA committee, that the Minister has many goals and ambitions that are shared by JEYA members to improve the lives and development of Early Years children in Jersey. We support the introduction of funding for 2-3 year olds and we were encouraged by the indications that a universal entitlement could be rolled out sooner than had originally been expected.

It was reassuring to hear that the Minister is no longer focused on filling the empty spaces in the school nursery classes and now sees the available spaces and resources as a flexible means to increase capacity if required to support existing settings. Our members are telling us that demand has fallen in the last 12 months, presumably due to the continuing decline in the birth rate and from the comments of the officers in attendance at the Scrutiny hearing, this appears to be consistent with the results of the Workforce Strategy

As well as being a key indicator on capacity, it will also provide insight into the staffing crisis currently facing the sector, which remains the single biggest challenge reported to us by members.

We would therefore urge the Minister and his officers to share the results with us as soon as possible.

The Minister referred to many ways the Dept is working with the private sector and gave the example of the work underway between JEYA and the Head of Economic Analysis to determine costings, not just for the care of 2 to 3 yr olds but in the PVI sector generally. He is correct that a lot of work has been done and we are committed to that piece of work. We are also represented on a Workforce Strategy Group lead by Skills Jersey but we feel that we could be contributing much more to the implementation of policies that affect our sector, the children and families for whom we provide care and are aligned with our own goals and ambitions.

For example, Jonathan Williams referred to the work that will be required to create a new model for the 2-3 year old funding, which may or may not be similar to the NEF model. We are clearly a key stakeholder and we believe that our knowledge and experience would be invaluable on the practical operation of such a model. Early consultation and engagement would provide us with an opportunity to gain a greater insight into the Ministers vision for the proposed funding and in turn our input will surely lead to a smoother roll-out and should help to avoid potential problems that would otherwise inevitably arise at a later stage.

In conclusion, we felt that the Scrutiny Hearing was positive. It is clear that we share a lot of the Minister's goals and ambitions and as a key stakeholder in the 2-3 funding, we feel that our membership has a lot to contribute to ensure that a workable scheme is launched as soon as practicably possible. Engagement is key and we would ask your Panel to recommend to the Minister that he and his officers engage with us without delay.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide comment and remain available should you have any further questions or comments.

With best wishes

Belinda Lewis
Chair JEYA