



Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Children and Families

Thursday, 30th April 2025

Panel:

Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier (Chair)

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville (Vice-Chair)

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée of St. Helier South

Witnesses:

Connétable R.P. Vibert of St. Peter, The Minister for Children and Families

Deputy M.R. Ferey of St. Saviour, Assistant Minister for Children and Families

Ms. D. Marriott, Director, Children's Services

Mr. D. Bowring, Associate Director, Children's Mental Health and Well-being

Ms. N. Kemp, Senior Policy Officer

[13:01]

Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier (Chair):

Welcome to this quarterly hearing of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. Today is 30th April. I would like to draw everyone's attention to the following. This hearing will be filmed and streamed live and the recording and transcript will be published afterwards on the States Assembly website. All electronic devices, including mobile phones, should be switched to silent. I am Deputy Catherine Curtis, the chair of the panel.

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville (Vice-Chair):

My name is Mark Labey, Connétable of Grouville. I am vice-chair.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée of St. Helier South:

Deputy Porée, panel member.

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade:

Deputy Helen Miles, panel member.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Richard Vibert, Minister for Children and Families.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Deputy Malcolm Ferey, Assistant Minister for Children and Families.

Associate Director, Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Darren Bowring, associate director of Children's Mental Health and Well-being.

Director, Children's Services:

Donna Marriott, director of Children's Services.

Senior Policy Officer:

Natalie Kemp, senior policy officer.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thanks everybody. We have got one and a half hours for this hearing. I shall start with some questions around social work. Minister, given a freedom of information request noted that there are 35 agency workers among 86 children's social work posts, can you update the panel of the current staffing composition, including the number of posts filled by permanent, fixed-term and agency workers?

Director, Children's Services:

If it is just social workers, we have got 19 vacancies.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, we have currently got here ... unfortunately some of the figures have been amalgamated here. So we have got 19 vacancies in social care at the moment.

Director, Children's Services:

Six permanent have recently started since those F.O.I. (freedom of information) figures were provided.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, so since the F.O.I. there has been some improvement in the situation. We have got 6 permanent social workers who have started and 2 agency workers who have converted to permanent. There are a further 9 permanent social workers who are currently in the onboarding or clearance process. That has improved since the F.O.I. request. I think you wanted details of the exact number of social workers, did you not?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

The number of permanent, fixed-term and agency at the moment.

The Minister for Children and Families:

There are 98 in total.

Director, Children's Services:

Sorry, we record it in different ways.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

We have got 86 children's social work posts notified here.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Sorry about this.

Director, Children's Services:

Because we have got them showing as our permanent and our ... so we have got 19 vacancies for social workers with 32 being covered by agency workers. So 19 vacancies in total. I will give you the rest. We will give you the rest; 49 overall vacancies across our broader service and residential.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Forty-nine is the residential service, so that is not social work. But we have 49 vacancies. That is the area I would be more concerned about. Children's residential, we currently have a vacant headcount of 49, and that is 47.29 F.T.E.s (full-time equivalents). We only have 12.91 of that covered by agency staff. So we are roughly 35 per cent below full complement.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

What is your full complement then of residential?

Director, Children's Services:

We have had some growth in there, this includes the growth of those vacancies. The actual total tied to the residential would be 144.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Is that social workers or is it social workers and support?

The Minister for Children and Families:

No, that is just residential.

Director, Children's Services:

Residential carers.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Social work, we have had an improvement there where we are managing to find people. Interestingly, when we talk about the shortage of social workers both here and in the U.K. (United Kingdom), I had the opportunity to speak to someone from the Australian small territories parliament - although that is a very large area they do not ... they are far larger than us and that includes the area including Canberra, the capital - they face exactly the same problems with us; a shortage of social workers and they will recruit worldwide to fill those vacancies. I am not sure that is an option for us but they go out worldwide and they still cannot get a full complement.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Is it an option for us?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think some would be but I think qualifications might be ...

Director, Children's Services:

Part of the work that we are doing as part of the reform programme is to look at recruitment and retention. We have got work going on around retention and the offer around that but some of that is about the grow-your-own scheme, about trying to bring people in off-Island that are living here and that is their life and trying to bring them through, help them to get qualified and then obviously they are likely to stay. There is some work going on in that and increasing that. We have just modelled that for the next 3 years as well, so that will hopefully help to improve longer term. We have also had some consideration about whether we do do something off-Island in a more targeted way as well. But probably more linked to some of our communities that are on the Island perhaps

in countries like Portugal and places like that we have got a higher population on-Island that might help us to make some inroads. So some work is going on to start to understand that and look in some of those communities at the moment, for fostering as well as social work. We have got quite a bit going on and I think probably can demonstrate that the agency or the vacancy rate was about 60 per cent agency probably about 18 months to 2 years ago and now it is in the 30s in percentages. So it is definitely moving in the right direction. You will always have ... I think wherever you are, and probably more on an Island, you will always have some degree of agency staff. It is probably quite healthy to have some that will help you to have more flexibility in your workforce and also to keep practice current particularly.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

If it gets too high it is not good for the children, is it?

Director, Children's Services:

It is higher than we want it to be, yes, definitely. You would want more stability than we have got.

The Minister for Children and Families:

On the residential, which is the area where we have the biggest shortfall in headcount, we have started a review of the T.s and C.s (terms and conditions) because I think that is where some of the issues are.

Director, Children's Services:

Definitely.

The Minister for Children and Families:

If we can resolve those then I think we will have more success in recruitment.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Is that like not enough flexibility for staff?

Director, Children's Services:

There are conditions, the whole sort of picture really we need to understand, and a training development package that goes with it, I think.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Just one question I wanted to ask about those residential staff with that lack of people you have got at the moment in residential care. Does that mean there is just not enough staff right now or you are trying to fill it in with more agency or what?

Director, Children's Services:

Do you want me to pick that up?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, because I mean agency is not easy either.

Director, Children's Services:

I think probably we are struggling more in the residential space than we are in the social work space, if I am honest with you. Some of that volume is linked to we have increased what we think the growth should be in that service to manage the future residential estate plan that we have got. That inflates it a bit, makes it look worse, but we have still got more of a shortfall than we would want to see. We are struggling to man and manage those homes, so it means that there is a lot of staff working more hours. Obviously, you would have to think about that impact and the T.s and C.s. I think we have tried to do quite a lot of work with opening up the agencies that we are working with that we use normally for social work. I think we have been having some more recent thinking that we need to think differently about potentially a different group of agencies that we liaise with to get those residential workers because it is a different kind of group of people that you are trying to recruit. That work started to expand that group but we are still struggling. I think we have got 12.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is it a different qualification framework for R.C.C.O.s (residential child care officer)?

Director, Children's Services:

Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Do we offer that qualification framework on-Island?

Director, Children's Services:

We do, yes. We have been training quite a considerable volume of residential workers. They have to do like a level 3, so there have been a large volume going through. I think the challenge is, is that large volume of staff are also trying to run an estate where we have not got enough R.C.C.O.s. Then that impacts on running the estate and then that impacts on their ability to engage in the training. We are in a bit of a vicious cycle that we have got to try and interrupt really. That is why we have agreed to go out for more agency staff to try and top up more to try to then make sure that we are getting that training offer through.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

But they cannot get time off to go and do the training.

Director, Children's Services:

It is a challenge. I think it is a real challenge. We have put quite a lot of staff through, but the volume they have to go through, because it is linked to also the registration of the homes and with the J.C.C. (Jersey Care Commission), that has an impact. So it is a thorny issue that we have got to unpick.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

When you are losing them, are you losing them to the third sector?

Director, Children's Services:

We have lost a bit. We know there are issues around pay I think, but that is why we need to do the T. and C. review and understand that. Some of that is. I think some people have moved across into different parts of the government where perhaps there are a different set of conditions and pay for them as well. Some people have been in the estate a long time and moving on to retirement and other things, so it is a bit of a mixed picture. We have a whole piece of work going on at the moment as part of the estate, the improvement plan to improve the training and development offer for those staff. We have had some large pieces of organisational development work in there at the moment, working around culture. We have been working on the policies and procedures, all of those have been redesigned and are just about to be launched now in the next 2 weeks when we can get them on to our Tri.X system. There is a really big change programme in there at the moment.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Then of course, the one thing is that leads to a fair amount of overtime having to be ...

Director, Children's Services:

A lot. Much more than we would want.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Which is tough on the staff over there. Put it this way, we are not saving any money by being 35 per cent under but it is tough on the people that are there.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

For the question about the numbers of permanent fixed-term and agency workers, perhaps we could follow that up in writing for an update.

[13:15]

This next question I am going to ask, which you may have this information now - I do not know - could you set up the cost of agency social work provision in 2023 and 2024?

The Minister for Children and Families:

No, I do not have that.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

And forecasted spend for 2025. So if we could send that to you perhaps after unless you can give any information on that.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Unless you have got it.

Director, Children's Services:

I have not got it to hand but we can easily do that for you. We will be able to provide it easily. We have done a whole baseline of the whole service. Last year was it, cost of agency?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I have got for 2023, 2024 and forecasted spend for 2025. How would it compare to the posts that have been filled by permanent staff? But we will send that on to you.

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, thank you.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

What actions has your department taken to convert agency workers to permanent roles and what are the barriers to this that might put people off, such as housing costs, right-to-work issues or professional registration? Is there any one ...?.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We have had some success in ... certainly in social workers we have had some success. I think in C.A.M.H.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) as well as ... residential is a bit different, is it not? Because I think there are advantages to being an agency worker and that goes back to the T.s and C.s. Which is why we urgently need that review. Somehow it is a bit of the service that has perhaps been overlooked in the past when it comes to reviews of T.s and C.s. So that is something that is in hand at the moment.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Apart from any preferences that people might have to being an agency worker, would issues such as cost of housing, right-to-work issues or professional registration put them off to becoming permanent? Any one in particular?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I do not think profession registration would be an issue but I think ... let us put it this way; pay and housing is an issue when you try to convert.

Director, Children's Services:

The social work registration is the same here, so you have your U.K. registration normally and then they add on the registration for the J.C.C., which it is more an administration thing. It is not complicated to do. I think everyone that works here has to do that, including me.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

There is not too much problem if an agency worker wants to convert to a permanent role around the permit in that way?

Director, Children's Services:

There has been a retention payment that has been attached to the social work offer that was part of work that was done a couple of years ago. That was targeting trying to get people to convert and stay. I think it has probably been quite successful, some of the analysis we have done. It was a time limited offer, so that is the work we have been doing as part of the improvement plan to put that back into the offer really that there is and to put that back into the bid for the Government Plan.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That is good. I remember it was one of the recommendations that this panel brought as well.

Director, Children's Services:

So we will go back and ask for that to be agreed again, and we are just doing the business case for that. To be fair, we have been having a bit of success. We have been targeting some of those workers and meeting with them about ... before the end of the year when we knew that money was going to run out, we went to all the social workers that were agency and said: "If you want to stay now is the time to do it. It is the right time, the retention payment is still there" and we have had some conversions from that that are still just coming through. But we need to do another piece of work now.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, we would just like to know about the caseload pressure in children's social care. What is the current average caseload for a permanent or agency social worker? Is there a maximum caseload that is considered safe?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I do not, but you may have those off the top of your head, do you not?

Director, Children's Services:

There is not really a maximum because every bit of the system you work in will probably expect something different. If you are doing ... perhaps in the assessment service you might expect people to hold more casework because they will be just doing assessments and moving work through. So you can do more of those than perhaps holding a child who is in care say that needs a lot more intervention, so it will change. I would say the caseloads across the whole system are really good. I think we offer really good caseloads, some of the best I have seen in my career. Sometimes they can peak a little bit higher and you see some in the 20 maybe in the safeguarding that probably you would not want to be as high as that, but they are not really difficult or really challenging caseloads.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

They would be the social worker for the 20 ...

Director, Children's Services:

In the middle part, yes. In that middle part, sort of child in need - child protection perhaps more - in that kind of piece of work because sometimes you will have a sibling group because that is children you are holding. So you might have larger sibling groups that might skew some of the numbers and you might see those figures at the front of the assessment service. Then as you go through, like children in care some of the caseloads are really low, 15 or less, some of them got less. I think reasonable. Lots of work going on for managers to keep an eye on that all of the time. It is something that is constantly being reviewed. If you have people leave and movement, sometimes they will peak a little bit more where you would not want anything to be unallocated in the system.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I think this is my last question on this part of the subject. Minister, what does your latest data tell you about turnover among permanent children's social workers over the past 12 months and what themes are emerging through exit interviews? I know we have discussed this a bit in a way, but do you record this to analyse it and have you got exit interviews?

The Minister for Children and Families:

We do exit interviews, yes.

Director, Children's Services:

We do exit interviews, yes. We have just started to ... we have just asked for a new piece of work to start to look at stay interviews as well, so we understand why ... we have not started yet but about to, to understand why people stay and what keeps them here and then understanding about why people leave and why they move. I think some things like accommodation, cost of living. Sometimes I think people do feel pressures in some of the casework. Sometimes there will be issues around family or career decisions as well.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

On the wider aspect of exit interviews, we offer an online platform now so an exit interview does not have to be on a one-to-one basis where maybe people do not feel so comfortable airing their views. So it is almost like a survey where there will be questions to prompt answers and some space for free text. We find that people can then do it at their leisure and there is no pressure on them to give the answers that perhaps the interviewer wants to hear.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That is good. Does everyone tend to do an exit interview?

Director, Children's Services:

No, but I think that there is quite a strong encouragement to try to do that. Some people do not want to. It is difficult, is it not?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

It is a really important part of the process though. We get so much learning when people leave an organisation. Whether it is for positive reasons or not, you still can gather so much really good quality information when people leave.

Director, Children's Services:

I think as we do more and more with social care where there is more of a focus on trying to understand I suppose the feedback from staff and the loop; there has been a lot of work since our Be Heard survey done last year. So a lot of the work has been happening with the workforce about trying to give staff a better voice and a greater voice and understand more about what works, what does not. The team have set up suggestion boxes around all of ... including the residential estate and in the workforce that people can anonymously post what they are happy or not happy about. There is a lot more weekly kit in place now for the team, which is for the whole service, and that is about an update. That is a chance for staff to feedback or raise issues or concerns. We have got the monthly direct ... D.C.S. celebration event where staff can celebrate different pieces of practice

that they want to be proud of. I think as that gets a bit better and the communication dialogue improves, I think we will understand more about the barriers to why people stay.

The Connétable of Grouville:

I would just like to say that for the last 3 years certainly this panel has been concerned, as are you and as are anybody involved in this service, about the changeover in staff, the retention and also the agency levels. We will continue to question you on these matters because we are concerned about the turnover and also the fact that the people that report to us are saying they are getting ... one individual might have 2 or 3 different social workers and they have to start their whole story each time. So we will remain concerned.

Director, Children's Services:

I think what I would say is that is definitely moving in the right direction. All of our team managers are permanent; that is the first time ever. I think we have got a reducing volume of vacancies in social workers and an increasing volume of permanence but we are not where we want to be yet. And you should keep an eye on it.

The Connétable of Grouville:

We are grateful for your honesty, to be fair.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I have just got some hopefully quick questions about reciprocal recognition of the care orders. I think we heard last time that for various reasons our care and supervision orders are not automatically recognised in England and Wales, which creates some potential legal challenges at this end about placing children off-Island, et cetera. At the last ... well, it was last year actually, you said drafting instructions have been sent to the U.K. in relation to reciprocal care orders. Can you tell us, Minister, what developments have taken place since then and what barriers remain to achieve that reciprocity?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Broadly, communications have continued between ourselves and the Department for Education but progress remains slow and that is largely due to obtaining legal advice from the Department of Education on the U.K. side. That legal source is currently allocated to the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill. I think the aim is to incorporate the changes into that bit of legislation or the same time as that bit of legislation.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So there will be like a permissive extent clause that will extend into Jersey, is that the idea?

The Minister for Children and Families:

That would have to be there, yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Are you content to agree to that permissive extent clause?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I would agree to that in this case, yes. The scope of the amendments has been agreed, so that is fine. I do not 100 per cent understand the process, the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill itself is currently with the House of Lords in its Second Reading at the moment, and it will progress to the committee stage next, which in effect is Scrutiny, and I think it is at that point that they will try to put our amendment into that bit of legislation.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Have we got a likely timetable then for when we will have those orders in place?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I wish I did.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, so it is still pretty open?

The Minister for Children and Families:

But it is not through not trying. We have got further meetings scheduled with them next month, so we will try to put more pressure on them.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So in the absence of those legal arrangements, what interim solutions are in place when you have got to place children in England?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Well, they have always acted on the Jersey orders. We know that, strictly speaking, it needs to be within the U.K. law as well. But, thankfully, there has never been, to date, an issue. But it is simply not in the legislation so therefore it is not assured that it would do.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

How many placements have you got in the U.K.?

Director, Children's Services:

Twelve.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Twelve.

Director, Children's Services:

Where we have had an issue, the safeguarding responsibility sits with the U.K., and that is very clear in legislation. If you have a child and they are at risk or they are a worry, and it requires safeguarding action in that local authority where the child resides, that is obviously where ... and we have had some incidents where there has been an issue or a concern and the police have acted really appropriately and the local authority have acted. We would make sure that that is asserted really well and we would drive that from this side as well.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Have you had the situation where you have had a local authority refuse to accept a child?

Director, Children's Services:

No. We have had some challenges, I suppose, where you have got old or young people that are moving out of being children in care and into an adult system of accessing services. But we have had some really good transition successes over the last year as well. We have had the U.K. pick up some very complex young people in adulthood and offer really good packages of care, which takes a lot more work than you might do if you are borough to borough in the U.K..

The Minister for Children and Families:

It is important to say we have had those successes.

Director, Children's Services:

Really good. Just recent one.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Where the U.K. care is of a type that we cannot offer and there really has been success, and it is good to see that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

What sort of resources are you having to allocate to liaising with local councils?

Director, Children's Services:

We are just in the process of and almost at the point where we have built a contract with someone in the U.K. It is not quite through, but it will enable us to have much better commissioning and contracting of U.K. placements. That will give us a much broader range and a much higher level of offer, much better matching, but that will also include quite a lot of quality assurance and oversight ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So is that with an agency in the U.K.?

Director, Children's Services:

From a local authority actually. We are just about to go into an S.L.A. (service level agreement) with them to try to ... because they will have a big commissioning service that obviously does a lot of placement.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Simply across their authority or out of county as well?

Director, Children's Services:

No, but they have access to all of the frameworks and there are new R.C.C. (Regional Care Co-operative) arrangements happening across the south-east of England that is countrywide.

[13:30]

They have got a lot of work going on about strengthening the quality of placements so they will also quality assure and oversee those placements for us. We have an extra layer of oversight and an extra layer of rigour around making sure the quality of the care and the support and what they need in that local area helps. But the social worker would be ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

That sounds really promising, does it not?

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, we are just ... I think this week we have started some early work on it so it is about to launch, so I am confident it will happen.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Donna, just for the public's benefit, could you explain what an R.C.C is?

Director, Children's Services:

So that is the Regional Care Co-operative in England. The Government in England have a really big review that came from the care review that they did several years ago, and that is just starting to really roll out now. They have offered 2 really big contracts, both south and north of England, which brings together a whole big group of local authorities to work together to improve the quality of care, like residential and foster care across the country, because it needs a lot of work to make it better. Our route in through this local authority will hopefully help us to get into that so it gives us access to the frameworks for all placements over the U.K. and this Regional Care Co-operative, which will start to build its own offer in the region. We hope that that will give us much higher quality and much better oversight of what ... if we do need to use U.K. placements, we are doing it for the right reason because children have more complex needs and we are unable to meet them here. Like if I needed open heart surgery I would go to the U.K. and get that done with a specialist in the same way. But then we are getting ... and the same as we do with C.A.M.H.S., like Darren's service will do if young people have mental health, that we are commissioning really higher quality and good oversight of those services.

The Connétable of Grouville:

I thought it would be worth the public hearing that; it is very worthwhile.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Those arrangements with the local authorities would also include access to the private providers as well, would it not?

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, all the supported accommodation is part of that offer as well. That will hopefully help us with older young people, because we have a group of young people that have been in the U.K. for some time, they will not want to move back to Jersey necessarily. So we have to work with teaching and helping them to be there. I think a lot of the work we are doing as well in children's social care is to start to say, actually, how can we be clearer about the children that we cannot meet their needs here because they have got specialist needs, making sure we get the right offer for them in England, but when they go they are going for a time-limited period. We are really clear about why and the intervention they need and when they are going to come back. Then making it better here in our estate that we can bring children back to the right arrangement and the right match for them. It is a big system thing rather than just a little bit of the process we need to fix.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Minister, I am going to ask you a few questions about the Greenfields secure accommodation, okay? In your Written Question 72/2025 to the States Assembly, you outlined your vision for a Greenfields campus with step-down emergency and remand beds. Can you detail the proposed bed numbers for each elements and your, if any at all, timeline for that implementation?

The Minister for Children and Families:

What I can do is tell you what we are currently doing. I think it is important to see that, in effect, work has commenced on that, so ...

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Sorry, did you say “as commenced”?

The Minister for Children and Families:

No, I said that work has commenced on this, and I will fill in the bits as we go through there. We have commenced with some urgent work on the building. The internal courtyard required work, and that is been tarmacked. We have also done some work on the glazing units to the bedrooms and communal areas. We are updating, using a biometric system, the security for the building. Rather importantly, something that has been on the agenda for many years, in fact the doors have been waiting there since possibly pre-COVID. This is in 2025 we are doing this, replacement of the bedroom doors and new doors which are not cell-type doors. Having seen them in the new secure unit in the south of England it is a major job to change them. That was true, the whole original metal, not just the cell door but the whole metal frame, has to be removed out of the concrete. So it is a big job. But that is going to be done this year. So all the bedrooms will be upgraded. That includes development within there of the inherent jurisdiction unit.

Director, Children’s Services:

That is the business case we are currently doing for that. To create that we will need extra funding but that is in hand.

The Minister for Children and Families:

That is 2 beds, is it not, for inherent jurisdiction?

Director, Children’s Services:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

What is this about; again for the public to understand as well?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Inherent jurisdiction is it is secure but it is less secure. So it is secure in that you cannot leave the property at night if you want to but you would be able to go to school, you would be taken to activities outside of the centre. It is not the current offering of Greenfields, which is fully secure, and you have to stay within that building for 24/7.

Director, Children's Services:

Can I just add to that, to fill in a little bit?

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Do you mind, what I am trying to do with these questions is more to talk about the physical side of it, maybe not so much about the children but more about your plans, timeline and that sort of question?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, so that is in the planning stage for 2025. That is 2 beds. If we know that there are 8 units to start with, that remains there will be 6 units.

Director, Children's Services:

Up to.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Up to 6 units.

Director, Children's Services:

Mostly for, I think, will be the custody.

The Minister for Children and Families:

That remain in Greenfields as secure accommodation. However, we do not necessarily always register for 6. We are likely to register for 3 or 4 places and that is the likely maximum at any one time. It can change if the court says, but there are up to 6 further units and they will all be refurbished.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

It is good to know that your timeline is 2025.

Director, Children's Services:

That would give a total of up to 6 custody and 2 inherent jurisdiction in the new ...

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

End of the year?

Director, Children's Services:

Not for the inherent jurisdiction. The money is being sought for the inherent jurisdiction now. We would try to get that done. It is in the plan for trying to get it in in-year.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Will.

Director, Children's Services:

But it is quite a lot of ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

It depends on getting the money, yes.

Director, Children's Services:

For the I.J. (inherent jurisdiction).

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

So that is maybe the next question ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

Could be 2026.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

... for you, Minister. What are the proposed capital costs of redevelopment of Greenfields? That with the total capital costs, we mean to ask about the construction, clinical integration and safeguarding measures.

Director, Children's Services:

We are just in the process of the business case for Greenfields. It is going to need some proper feasibility study, because this part ... we have got a cost for this part, which includes all the inherent jurisdiction and everything like that, but the actual phase 2 of Greenfields' plans are much more about creating the current school that sits on the site, bringing that into Greenfields and creating some outside space, which will include some allotment space, some outside engineering, things like that. So that will need to be properly costed and will obviously cost several million. We have only got the current cost in for this year in-year.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Any idea when you may be in a position to bring those costs to the Assembly, Minister? For the Assembly approval.

The Minister for Children and Families:

When is our next meeting with you?

Director, Children's Services:

It is due to go to C.O.M. (Council of Ministers), I think, in June.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We are trying to get it to C.O.M. in June/July.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Will it come forward as a separate proposition or will you be putting it in the Budget?

Director, Children's Services:

In the Budget.

The Minister for Children and Families:

It will be in the Budget.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

What engagements has your department had with the Jersey Care Commission, the Attorney General's Office and the court judges to ensure that the new model of Greenfields redevelopment site is legally and clinically compliant? Have you managed to have any talks at this stage?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, we have.

Director, Children's Services:

We have started to work with the Family Justice Council and we have engaged with both the Deputy Bailiff and they have got a U.K. judge sitting here that is doing quite a lot of the work under the new Family Justice Council. We have started discussions with her about inherent jurisdiction and that model of practice. The plan is that they are going to build some guidance around that legislatively. Because it is already in law we just need to change practice a little bit on how we operate, because at the moment we have secure orders much more and what we want to do is be much more flexible

and much more proportionate. That work is already underway. That senior judge has been down to my department to meet with my staff to talk about how orders and things are working.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

So have the discussions been moving positively in favour of the project?

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, very. We have the J.C.C. in to my team to look at the new residential estate plan and the proposals. We are working on them now about all the registration of all the homes because there will need to be some amendments. We are just about to open our first new home or refurbished home under the new model next week. We have just changed the registration for that home to offer it for younger children that will enable us to start the first part of that plan.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Because there is another small building, is there not, in ...

Director, Children's Services:

The school.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes. What are we are going to use that for?

Director, Children's Services:

There is a house attached to the school and that is going to be an emergency bed and probably a remand bed is our plan.

The Minister for Children and Families:

So this fits into the new requirement in the law to be able to offer non-secure accommodation ...

Director, Children's Services:

Overnight.

The Minister for Children and Families:

... where somebody is not granted bail but you would not want to ... at the moment, if they are not granted bail then the only option is Greenfields. Where here we will have, in effect, a secure bed but not secure accommodation, in which they will be able to be placed in a much ... put it this way, a more pleasant atmosphere.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Does that mean you are not taking forward any bail fostering ideas?

The Minister for Children and Families:

We are not, it is ...

Director, Children's Services:

We are looking at whether that option of that home might be a ... we might use it in a different way, which includes fostering and foster carers.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Which includes specialist foster care.

Director, Children's Services:

So a different kind of model.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, so it is a different model, but it is something that is incorporated within it.

Director, Children's Services:

There is a bit of a plan to look at a Mockingbird fostering model. That is a group of foster carers that work together that probably would fit into that.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

What you are responding now may be part of my next question and maybe you could give us a little bit more detail on that. What arrangements will be in place to maintain continuity of education, mental health input and safeguarding during the redevelopment period? That is the question. What sort of arrangements?

Director, Children's Services:

In the new model? So everything should carry on as normal until we have that new model up and running. But in the new model, and Darren's service has a C.A.M.H.S. children-in-care offer that includes a therapist and a psychologist input, there will be nursing capacity. In that new model for the Greenfields campus or the Five Oaks campus the plan is to bring the school into that site. We have got a big task and finish group working at the moment. They are building what the education offer would look like in that.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Are you building a team for that?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Because we have the additional buildings now on site of course we can develop these things while business as usual remains in Greenfields, and then move over to the new offer when the buildings are completed.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

That is good to hear.

The Minister for Children and Families:

So there is no break in what we offer, but it will be a much better offer once the buildings are completed.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

During the redevelopment process, do you feel that some young people will have to be moved away from the Island for that?

The Minister for Children and Families:

No.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

For lack of specific accommodation or support?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I would not have thought so.

Director, Children's Services:

I do not think we anticipate that. I suppose we have a shortage in beds currently, but we have got ... as an interim arrangement, we have just started to look at 2 properties that will come up and running, but not until the end of the summer. That will help us fit with the sufficiency challenge we have got today, and that will help us to start to bridge the gap while we have got the new plan that is going to take several years, really. It is probably, I think, a 2030 plan, so it is going to take a while.

[13:45]

We have got some interim accommodation coming online that we are just having refurbished now, which will hopefully help to give more consistency on-Island.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We hope to get Government backing for the other properties that we believe ... well, that we know we need and are already owned by the Government.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Just to add to that, I was going to ask, over the years we have heard about the aim to make Greenfields more of a therapeutic centre. So the new plans for later, are they still modelled around that being more of a therapeutic centre? You mentioned about the importance of C.A.M.H.S.

Director, Children's Services:

Much more specialist.

The Minister for Children and Families:

The fact that we have got a lot more space now to do it in is a bonus.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Minister, I am going to move on to the topic of child poverty, if I may. Writing in the *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* article published in March 2025, the Children's Commissioner stated that one-third of Jersey's children live in poverty. How does your department define and measure poverty? Do you accept that headline figure?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Do we accept that headline figure?

Senior Policy Officer:

In terms of our measures and indicators that we use, we know about the proportion of children who live in households who are defined as low income, so those households who earn less than 60 per cent of their medium equivalised household income after housing costs. We do know, and the Minister is aware, of the number of children that live within those households. We include both that indicator and the percentage of households who find it difficult to cope financially. Both of those indicators are indicators within the children, young people and families plan and also form part of the Island outcome indicators.

The Connétable of Grouville:

But we were told yesterday that we have 18,000 children in the Island. Does your department accept that figure, do you think?

Senior Policy Officer:

Our figures would align with those that are published by Statistics Jersey in accordance with the indicators as outlined previously, so those proportion of children living in the households.

The Connétable of Grouville:

That are, okay.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Is that about one-third?

Senior Policy Officer:

I can get the number for you.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think we need to, yes, because I think the third would have been arrived at differently. But I think when you talk about child poverty, often there is an immediate assumption that it would be families that are on income support and housed fully under the rent rebate scheme. There is evidence that of course shows that the poverty area is probably those who are slightly outside of that. I was having this discussion yesterday with the Minister for Housing that there is a band immediately above those on income support, and that is where we have real poverty for both children and families.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So it is a bit like working parents.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, and I do not think that is recognised and I think we need to recognise that. But it is not necessarily the families that are on income support, because it is quite easy just to bundle all those figures and say these are the families that are in child poverty or family poverty or rental poverty and actually there is a more serious gap that is developing.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

When I just said about working parents, there are a lot of working parents on income support as well, of course.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That is interesting.

The Connétable of Grouville:

What specific measures, Minister, in the 2025-28 Government Plan, such as Jersey Premium, child care subsidies or housing initiatives, are aimed at reducing child poverty and how will progress be tracked?

The Minister for Children and Families:

We have done some things already to assist in these areas. We have reduced G.P. (general practitioner) fees for children, we have had the rollout of the hot school meals programme, increased government funding in early childhood education and, of course, that is due to be extended. Those are some of the things that we are doing.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

And the increase in minimum wage of course.

The Minister for Children and Families:

The increase in minimum wage, trying to move to the living wage. Yes, there is a lot of work going on. There is a Cost-of-Living Ministerial Group which does not include Children's Services, but they are actively also looking at these issues.

The Connétable of Grouville:

I was just about to ask you about that, Minister. This particular organisation, does it report publicly?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I cannot say that I have ...

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

The meetings are not in public. Whether the minutes are produced to the public, we would need to check that.

The Connétable of Grouville:

The panel would be interested in that.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We are not on that forum so we do not receive any of that output.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Okay. Thank you, Minister.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Sorry, I was just thinking, I suppose it would be good for the Minister for Children and Families to be on the forum.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I thought so as well, but apparently we are not in the group. If you would like to make a recommendation I would quite happily take that up, so there we are.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I think that would be a good idea.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

To be fair, most of the mechanisms that can improve things are in the gift of the Minister for Social Security. That is where lots of those bells and whistles are and levers to help improve things.

The Connétable of Grouville:

The question was going to be actually that ... the terminology was cross-government structures so that is something that we need to ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

We want to eradicate child poverty so a membership of that group I think would be useful.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes, I think so.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

All right. I have some questions now about the Health and Care Partnership Board because there was a written question about this but also there was a briefing given to States Members when I heard that this new partnership board will include ... the membership model will include Children's Services and C.A.M.H.S. So we were wondering how that would work; if Children's Services and C.A.M.H.S. have full representation and when voting rights will be able to ... will their opinion have as much weight in this board?

Director, Children's Services:

I do not think we are decision makers on that board from what that has been set up, no. But attendees and part of that, so we would be held to be involved in decision-making and involved in some of the discussions and consultations. But not a decision-making vote.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

No. But influences in the direction of travel.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, and has that already started then?

Director, Children's Services:

No, not yet. It is about to ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So it is very new.

Director, Children's Services:

It is just having the governance sorted now.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

It is just happening now.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. My next question is: what performance indicators specifically related to children's outcomes? Will the board monitor and publish regularly? But I do not know if you will know that then at the moment.

Director, Children's Services:

No.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I do not think we have the details.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

We do not have that level of detail.

Director, Children's Services:

The governance is being done now about the terms of reference and the membership currently.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, so the sort of thing which will be considered I expect. The last question again is: what mechanisms would ensure that children, young people and care leavers are meaningfully involved in shaping the board's priorities? So, maybe not; I do not know.

The Minister for Children and Families:

No.

Director, Children's Services:

But we do have, I suppose in respect of care leavers, and I know that Darren will have all of your route through C.O.C. (Children's Outcomes Committee) and all of that sort of thing into the health space. But also for care leavers under the Corporate Parenting Board, there is a new health subgroup that has been set up. and that is for children in care and care leavers looking at all of the work that needs to be done in that space to improve their outcomes. That reports through the Corporate Parenting Board and the Outcomes Committee, so that work is starting to get launched about developing health passports for care leavers and pathways, ensuring that the care leaver offer is clear and understood, all of that work is underway.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

We do not yet know a lot about the Health and Care Partnership Board but I just wonder how much these different groups speak to each other as well.

Director, Children's Services:

Part of their terms of reference will address I think the interface between the various boards and the various Ministerial groups I suppose they need to report into. I think your Children's Outcomes Committee will bring everything together.

Senior Policy Officer:

The Children's Outcomes Executive Committee is that opportunity and both Ministers, so both the Minister for Health and Social Services, Minister for Children and Families, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, Justice and Home Affairs and Housing all sit on the Children's Outcomes Executive Committee. That is another Ministerial group which looks at that cross-government policy.

Director, Children's Services:

They also all sit on the Corporate Parenting Board as well, that group of Ministers.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, because I know we have talked before about the Corporate Parenting Board, but the Children's Outcomes Executive Committee, how often do they meet?

Senior Policy Officer:

That committee meets 6-monthly, so twice a year, and that is another mechanism by which we do monitor the progress of the plan using outcomes-based accountability. As I mentioned previously, with the indicators under the outcome of children living a decent standard of living, we would monitor those indicators as part of that group, and also living healthy and happy lives comes under the oversight of the C.O.E.C. (Children's Outcomes Executive Committee).

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, great. Did you get a chance to look at those numbers of children in poverty or perhaps send them to us in writing later?

Senior Policy Officer:

I can do that, yes, absolutely.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay thank you. I think that is you now.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Okay, well my set of questions is with reference to the play facility and the Island-wide strategy. Minister, can you provide the panel with the delivery schedule and funding allocations for the new play youth space at Fort Regent, which would include design, building, operation, and so on?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Do you have that information, Malcolm?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

No, not specifically on Fort Regent.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Would you be in a position to forward it to us? If you have the different phases, that would be really good, thank you.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, we can do that.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Because actually J.D.C. (Jersey Development Company) is developing that.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Exactly.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I do not know how much of that information we will actually...

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

If we have got it, we can get it to you.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think that might be one ... strangely enough, J.D.C. comes under Treasury, does not it?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

It does.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Thank you. Your team previously said that the play strategy was nearly finalised. When will the full Island-wide strategy be published? I suppose you have just kind of touched on it.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, so the play strategy, in particular, the timeline for publication is by the end of this year. But we have gone out to stakeholders, and that includes obviously children and young people, as well as professionals and other people with an interest in that field. We have got a draft strategy nearing completion. Once that comes to a form where it is able to be read and it will make sense, we will go back to the stakeholders for their final feed into it. Then we will publish before the end of this year.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

With regards to stakeholders and groups, have you had any groups involved in shaping the strategies such as the Youth Parliament, for instance, so the disability advocate groups.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes. We have had lots of stakeholder engagement, lots of high-level meetings where we just garnered people's opinions and views. But what we were a little bit cautious of is particularly children and young people have been asked about this time and time again. While it was really important to have a quick check-in with children and young people, we did not go any deeper than has already

been the case because the feedback that we got was: "You keep asking us, please just get on and do it." Of course, there were some good success stories with the new park opening recently in town and how well used that is. People can start to see that things are happening. But yes, I suppose when you are younger a year seems a long time. There was a bit of a frustration there. We did check in and the way we did that was we went to the Jersey Youth Service annual conference basically. We checked in with young people as they were milling about during the conference, which was a really valuable exercise just to be able to say: "What is important to you and where would you like to see more play spaces?"

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

That sounds positive, thank you. How will your department evaluate the impact of improved play spaces, particularly for children with disability on physical activity, social development and mental well-being?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

It is really important that play spaces are inclusive. I think the important thing to get across is, it is not just about play parks and apparatus, it is also about creating play spaces in woods, in outdoor areas that are not perhaps official play spaces. That can be done relatively inexpensively, but it is just creating opportunities for play and the positive impact that that can have on all children. But obviously children who have got disabilities in particular, it is a great way to include everybody.

[14:00]

Children of all abilities play together, grow up together and learn together, is just good for everyone's health and well-being.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Can I just ask a quick question? Are you planning on putting any funding for the play strategy into the Budget?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Right, so where we are with, at the moment, is we will ... the play strategy is what does Jersey need? It is not attached to any funding at the moment. The thinking being that once we agree what the Island needs, it will transcend any political term and hopefully will be carried forward into the next Assembly where they will take that as a document that has been read and understood, and that is what Jersey needs, and then funding will follow.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So there is no thought about seed funding some of the work in this year's Budget?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Not directly, no; not at this stage.

The Minister for Children and Families:

There are schemes out there with both the Government and the Parishes. Part of the work is getting people in touch with each other.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Exactly.

The Minister for Children and Families:

One thing that came out from the kids when we were up at Highlands, when we went up there was, of course, a big blow to them is the fact that the aMaizin! maze has ... sadly, they thought that was something to do with the Government. But that is a big blow. They have lost ...

The Connétable of Grouville:

It is my cousin, Carlton.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, well, we were hoping to ...

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

There are some opportunities.

The Minister for Children and Families:

There are some opportunities for the Youth Service for some of the equipment. Malcolm and I have been up there.

Senior Policy Officer:

Can I add in terms of monitoring, because that was part of your question? We also have the data from the Jersey Children and Young People Survey. One of the questions that we ask is about physical activity, so we are mindful of those results. That is a really good, robust source of data for us that we will look at and review.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I was going to ask, actually, when you talked about the importance of inclusion for children in play and so on, but I do not think you mentioned how you would evaluate the impacts. There is the Children and Young People Survey, but will there be any efforts made to go out and speak to children, maybe from disabled groups?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, I think it is an ongoing piece of work. The strategy is just really the starting point. Beyond that, there will need to be regular checks back in with children and young people about how it is having a positive impact on their lives. The simplest and most effective way of doing that is through the Jersey Youth Service because they are a cohort of people that we are regularly in contact with and are really easy to get their opinions and views on.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Minister, the next group of questions is about C.A.M.H.S. The 2024 C.A.M.H.S. report recorded 31-day median waits for mental health assessment and 55-week waits for neurodevelopmental assessment. Minister, can you advise the panel what are the Q1 2025 figures for each pathway as they stand?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Which was the 31-week ...

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thirty-one-day median waits for mental health assessment and 55 week waits - you are going to ask me to say it again, are you not - neuro ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

No, that one I have got, the neuro assessment. I mean Darren will be able to provide greater detail on this. I think the 31 days, that one is reasonably static, is it not, but it is perhaps not such good news on the neuro adversity.

Associate Director, Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

No. Do you want me to answer both of those?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Associate Director, Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes, you know we have a target of wanting to complete mental health assessments of all general referrals in 36 days, so in quarter one we were under that again and 4.3 weeks; so a similar figure to the number that was given for the whole of last year. That is incredibly rapid, as we have talked before, to complete assessments of the more lower-level mental health issues. The more serious cases obviously get allocated and responded to immediately. Neurodevelopmental assessments have increased slightly to 70 weeks, quarter one, and I would like to give a bit of context of that as well. The positive for quarter one is that we have delivered significantly more assessments in the first 3 months of this year than we have had referrals in, so that is going to have an impact in that our capacity is now well above the current level of referrals coming through. That is a positive. We have seen some challenges though and in January alone we had 29 potential assessments for A.D.H.D. (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) we could not complete due to delays in the return of scales and reports coming to enable our clinicians to be able to complete them from partner agencies, such as schools. We have revisited our assessment pathway and, from 1st April, we have changed our pathway that we will now not take an assessment unless all the completed paperwork is in place. But also to support that at the identification of any issues or features of neurodiversity, we have requested a referral to our early intervention service who will support schools and families together to create an immediate support plan at that stage and support the providers then to be able to provide all the assessment and forms that we require for the assessment. How that will help is that we will be able to then allocate people immediately for a diagnostic assessment, and if somebody cannot make an assessment we have got packs ready to bring other families in. I think that is going to make a difference. We have brought 2 additional administrators in on temporary contracts full-time for the number of people on the waiting list to make sure we have got all the information for all of those sat on the waiting list ready to go and we can allocate them assessments. We are doing work to make sure we have all the detail. We have already done work to increase capacity, and we have done a bit more further work in terms of to increase support that young people, children and people in families get at the notification of features of neurodiversity as well so I hope all that is going to help improve the experience on the pathway.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you, Darren.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can I just ask? We often hear now of children being diagnosed with autism and A.D.H.D., so do you still have separate processes for those assessments or is it all in one now?

Associate Director, Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Where there is a question of both, we are doing dual assessments, so we are doing them at the same time. It does not always work quite that way. For example, a child might be referred for

A.D.H.D. and then a clinician, as part of the assessment, queries whether it might be autism or there might be a dual diagnosis of autism as well and then puts that individual on to the stage for the next pathway. But we do have the capacity to be able to do dual assessments at the same time, which we had not historically. Previously, people had to wait, do one and then wait for the next one. That does not happen now. We do them at the same time.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That is good that you can do the dual ones but otherwise is there a big difference between the waiting time for A.D.H.D. assessment and autism assessment?

Associate Director, Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

A.D.H.D. is taking us longer because of the sheer volume that we have had over the last 2 years in A.D.H.D. We are much quicker with our autism assessment. For the first 3 months of this year, we have had an additional private psychiatrist working with us full-time solely doing A.D.H.D. assessments, which has added to the capacity. We are currently looking to bring over another locum psychiatrist to work for the next few months doing the same with some underspend we have got from other posts and vacancies. So every spare bit of funding that we have got, we are trying to add. We have got increased capacity in this area because we know how important it is to get that waiting time down. I know the difficulties families face so it is an absolute service priority to address that.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Good. My next question, strangely Darren, is about staffing. How many currently C.A.M.H.S. roles are vacant, and could you provide the panel with specific professional groupings; like psychiatry, psychology, specialist nursing; how many are there vacant currently?

Associate Director, Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Do you want me to answer that, Minister?

The Minister for Children and Families:

If you can, yes.

Associate Director, Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

We currently have a staffing of 72: 60 funded by C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills) and 12 posts funded by Health, which includes our medical staff and our medical secretaries. Of the 72 staff, we have 8 vacancies currently. We are recruiting for 9 because we have got an office manager who yesterday went on parental leave, so we are also recruiting for a temporary cover for that. So we have got 9 positions we are recruiting to. Six are at advert stage,

3 are at interview stage, which includes today we are interviewing for a clinical fellow today which has had good responses to. The posts which we are struggling a little bit, we have 2 psychiatry vacancies, but both are being covered by locum staff. They are a challenge. We have got a stall coming up at the Royal College of Psychiatrists International Congress in Cardiff where we are sending our clinical lead and service manager to try to engineer some interest in those vacancies, but they are being covered at the moment by locum staff. The clinical fellow, which I talked about, is an additional post that is being funded between Health and ourselves because of some underspend issues as well, so we are going to add to some of that medical issue. We have got a psychology vacancy at the moment. That has been advertised twice with little response. Again, I am pleased to announce as well that we talked before about the work we have done to try and grow support and grow our assistant psychologists to become clinical psychologists on-Island. Our first 2 successful candidates have been interviewed and been offered positions, and will start in September through the University of Southampton and working on-Island training to become clinical psychologists. That is an absolute huge bit of progress. For the first time ever, we have got local young people going through to train in a position that has been notoriously difficult to recruit to.

The Connétable of Grouville:

That is wonderful.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

How many years will they have to study?

Associate Director, Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

It will take them 3 years, but all of their placements will be done on-Island between C.A.M.H.S., Adult Mental Health and the various services.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Social worker training.

Associate Director, Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Fully funded?

Associate Director, Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Fully funded on the Island, which is really good.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Bravo.

Associate Director, Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

We have also got 2 psychology students coming in for internships over the summer period on their last year of university as well, so we are trying to encourage people with their placements. The other challenge has been nurses. Our other agency cover is in nurses. Over the last month we have started 2 C.A.M.H.S. grade 4 newly qualified nurses. These are, again, 2 local staff that have done their nurse training in Jersey. We have never had grade 4 nurses on preceptorship in C.A.M.H.S. before but we have now converted some posts, so we have 2 brand new qualified who we are training and supporting through preceptorship as well. I think some of those bits about ... in terms of our efforts about how we are trying to reflect on some of these difficult to recruit and making sure we have got local people coming through and being supported to do that will make a real difference. In terms of the psychiatry bit, the clinical fellow, they are locally qualified people on the route to being doctors and qualified, so that is going to give somebody an experience within us as well. I do not think we are doing too bad for recruitment. It is a challenge and a bit of fight, but we are working hard to address it.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Bravo. My next question is about the A.R.F.I.D. (Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder) pathway. Now, just for the public, A.R.F.I.D. - we have so many acronyms, goodness me - is Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder. Please provide the implementation timeline for the A.R.F.I.D. pathway including go live date, data, referral criteria, safe training and how the impact will be monitored.

Associate Director, Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Okay. I guess we have done quite a bit of work. A.R.F.I.D. has been historically referred to as selective eating disorder, fussy eating, feeding disorder, picky eating and we are very well aware it has a significant impact on young people. There are health impacts and also stress to families in terms of securing particular food items and so on, so I think it is something really important as an Island that we look to make sure that we have an identified pathway, and we have support in that. What we have done since the last Scrutiny is that between our eating disorder service in C.A.M.H.S. and our consultant dietician, we have come up with a discussion document and a proposal which details some of the pathways and responses in the U.K. and evidence-based responses to support A.R.F.I.D. I was given this document at the beginning of the week and it comes up with a number of proposals in terms of how we consider a supportive approach in Jersey. This is not necessarily solely a C.A.M.H.S. piece of work as well. This crosses a number of different disciplines, particularly health, health psychology and dietician support as well. I have also been discussing with a parent's

group which has been set up, and I know Deputy Curtis has similar conversations as well. Our next step is to meet with that group to go through with our consultant document to see what they think in terms of the suggested pathways and approaches are going to be the most helpful and how we can address any of the immediate concerns. We have not got a timeline yet in terms of delivery. Obviously, children with any indicative eating issues that are causing risks or anything would come through C.A.M.H.S. anyway.

[14:15]

What this pathway would look at doing would be creating a much more robust and bespoke one for those children that meet that A.R.F.I.D. criteria but it might not be a C.A.M.H.S. solely piece of work.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Do you perceive any staff training issues? Are there staff implications?

Associate Director, Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

There is going to be significant training. We will potentially have business cases for additional staff because, from what I know, there are around 40 to 50 families at the moment reporting experiences with this. Again, it is another cohort of individuals who potentially require support on top of the other service pressures that we have within the C.A.M.H.S. service, so doing this properly and providing it right and having the right staff to respond with the right training may well require some business case recruitment and training.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you. The recommendations issued by the Jersey Care Commission and the Royal College of Psychiatrists in November 2024, which still remain open, what is their revised completion schedule?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Is it the C.A.M.H.S. inspection?

The Connétable of Grouville:

The C.A.M.H.S. inspection.

Associate Director, Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes. We had 2 recommendations. The one was about collaborative engagement with our care plans, with children, young people and their families. We had 12 weeks to deliver on that. I believe the first week in June is the end of that. We have been putting a huge amount of work into that. We

have some good levels of data in terms of our compliance with that recommendation, which we review on a weekly basis at our management meeting, and we have been making good inroads into that. I am fairly confident that that recommendation will be fully met within the timescale and it was a helpful recommendation to have. It was a sensible thing that we need to focus on. The other recommendation, which was more of a challenge for us really, was this idea of C.A.M.H.S. still supporting the development of a shared care prescribing for A.D.H.D. medication with G.P.s. As we explained to the Care Commission, we are very keen on that. We have developed guidance for G.P.s and we submitted the application for that to happen to the Pharmaceutical Benefit Advisory Committee with Adult Mental Health. The decision, though, lies with P.B.A.C. (Pharmaceutical Benefit Advisory Committee) who decided to pause on that because of medication shortages. It also relies on G.P.s to make a decision to agree to that, and that really sits a little bit outside of our remit to be able to influence. Obviously, we are still committed. We think it would make a great difference to families to access medication and the ease of that and obviously it would help our clinical staff. My clinical lead spent nearly 2 hours on Friday just writing repeat prescriptions which, with the other service pressures, is not a good use of resource. So we are very keen for that to happen, but we have done what we can.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Out of your control.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Make it so, as Jean-Luc Picard once said. What formal government arrangements are in place between C.A.M.H.S. and educational psychology to avoid duplicated assessments and how is this monitored?

Associate Director, Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

I guess the assessments that we would complete in C.A.M.H.S. would be very different to the assessments that would be completed within schools by educational psychology as well. I am not aware that that has been an issue. Where we have any specific education-based issues, obviously under the Jersey's Children First practice guidance we usually have teams around those individuals and children so our clinicians would also know who was working with them from education, and there would be regular meetings to discuss joint pieces of work to make sure where there was any overlap or joint decision-making it was taken together. I am not aware of that causing an issue.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Okay. Thank you.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

When a child comes to you for something, if they have had educational psychology reports done on them, would you be likely to see that as well?

Associate Director, Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

You see all that anyway.

Associate Director, Children's Mental Health and Well-being:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Great. I think that is you, Helen.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay. Thank you. I have just got some questions about short break service and respite care. We asked a written question about the review of short breaks provision and the answer to that said that it was still ongoing as part of the Children's Services improvement programme and not expected to be published until 2026. Minister, could you update the panel on what milestones have been set for this review? What interim measures are in place to improve access and equity for families while that work is ongoing?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Do you want to do that, Donna? I mean we are still working on it, but I will ask Donna to give you ...

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, that is a piece of work being undertaken by a commissioning service to review, I suppose, and understand the whole short breaks offer. There has been quite a bit of work, I think, to understand the bigger picture and to get some views. I think part of that needs to include the review of our short break home as well, or the 2 short breaks homes. All of the offers for support for families, whatever route they come through in terms of children's social care, come through the resource panel, so that there is a fair and equitable approach for all of the care packages. The social worker will do the assessment. The assessment will determine need. They will set out what they think the care package should be and short breaks is part of that offer, whatever the offer might be a family needs. That will go to the resource panel. The resource panel will set and allocate - or agree or not - the package of care that is needed. That process will stay in place and reviews individually all the

children's care plans. We are trying to get together the work to bring together our head of service who deals with the short breaks homes, who has got quite an expertise and experience in working with disabled children into that space as well. That work is just being mobilised now. The plan has not been developed yet but it will be. They need to take the work that has been done to date and bring it into one space.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

For children who do not have social workers, how easy is it for them to access a short break service?

Director, Children's Services:

Part of the work that is being done includes the offer underneath social care that sits in the early help service who do provide short break service. I think what we know is there is probably quite a good offering in a general way. It is provided by the Youth Service, but it is a commissioned arrangement, but probably a greater need for some of those children with more complex needs, so that is the work that we need to map out really. I think what we see is there is probably a lack of that resource on the Island, and it is probably about stimulating the market and looking at how to develop it.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

In terms of milestones then for that review, what will be your next milestone for that review?

Director, Children's Services:

The group are due to get together. They have got to bring the work that was done earlier in the year that was the first level review that commissioning has done, and then they will put together an action plan from there. I do not know the timeline for the meeting that is going to be set up, but we can come back to you from that with commissioning.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you. A further written question as well asked about spending at Oakwell and we saw from the answer that costs have risen to over £930,000 in 2024, staffing accounting for the vast majority, but the number of children using the service has remained flat at 14 across several years. Can you just tell us how your department is assessing the cost effectiveness of the Oakwell provision and whether you have got any plans to expand or contract or increase.

Director, Children's Services:

I think part of that work on the short breaks offer will review the offer from Oakwell and Eden to see how we would make that offer greater because what we have is a small group of parents that are getting quite a good service and a number of families that want to access the service but there are

only so many nights ... I mean every home costs a lot of money to run, particularly when you have got the expertise of the staff that you need in a unit like that with extra nursing care and all of the other parts that goes with it. If everyone has overnight short breaks it will have a very finite limit to how many beds you can use to how many nights you can offer throughout the year. I think that is what it is held by. The thing we have got to look at better is how can we extend that beyond just those homes, what could the offer look like and is there a better offer in the market that we can stimulate to increase it? But also, part of that review needs to include the offer that those 2 units provide.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

What factors really resulted in the reduction of operational nights from 7 to 6?

Director, Children's Services:

Staffing capacity. It was purely about staffing capacity.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Are we able to reassure parents that there will be a 7-night availability in the near future?

Director, Children's Services:

Not at this time because it links to our capacity in the residential estate and workforce.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, so the people that staff Oakwell, as well as needing medical qualifications for nursing, do you also have Residential Child Care Officers in there as well?

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, there are R.C.C.O.s.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

In terms of prioritisation - it might be an unfair question - where do you prioritise your R.C.C.O.s then?

Director, Children's Services:

I guess the challenge we have had is across the whole system. We have had some court-related matters that have driven homes being open, that we have had some homes close, and we have got some homes moving. We have got a secure home to run, which obviously has to be staffed in the right way. So across the whole piece we would want to offer more but we know we have got to do the workforce reform across the whole residential estate to get enough staff across the whole

system. It is all a bit of a challenge really and, until we do the whole system reform, I think the short breaks offer will be affected like everything else. Also, I think we have got a bit of survey work to understand whether that offer is the right offer and are we targeting it ... you know in the U.K. a lot of short breaks will have moved into less overnights and more offers and then you can offer more to families, so I think we need to go through that process.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Are you confident, particularly when it comes to Oakwell, which is obviously specifically for children with physical disabilities ...

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, much more complex.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

... that you are capturing the number of children with physical disabilities whose families require ...

Director, Children's Services:

I would not say I am confident, no. No, absolutely not. I do not think we are. I think that is the work we need to do to be confident and I do not think we are.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay.

Director, Children's Services:

We understand we now need to do the work. I think we have started to capture the extent of need. We need to bring that work together that was done earlier in the year and understand about, I suppose, what impacts it but the whole picture because there are lots of different services providing lots of different short breaks in different ways, and really we need to understand the whole and then understand the families that are waiting; are they waiting for the right service in that? Because a lot of people want overnight short breaks but it is such a limited resource, and it always will ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

It sounds like you said that the pathway is coming through Early Help but if parents do not engage with Early Help ... I guess the situation we have is that some parents cope really well with their children's disability at home, do not need a social worker but they would really, really like a night off.

Director, Children's Services:

That is the challenge you have got because there is only one unit really that does that, so you are never going to be able to meet the demand of all those parents for overnight short breaks, so the Early Help offer ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Not within one ...

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, so the Early Help offer that is running, that runs through the Youth Service is not an overnight short break. They are offering activities, timeout for children, an evening where children go and do. We have got no plan to open another home to provide more overnight short breaks and it is probably a different model as well probably in terms of you will never ... unless you open lots and lots of homes, to provide those numbers of overnight short breaks would be challenging. I do not think that will be in the model, but we need to understand need because some parents really need that overnight and some parents do not, and have we got the right parents and where does need lie? I think that is the work we need to understand more.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

We just have a couple of really quick questions. Minister, are you concerned about the budget for the Children's Commissioner's office being cut next year?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think there is a slight reduction. There is a savings target, and I think one is concerned about any cut, whether it is the Children's Commissioner or cuts to our own budget and so overall, yes. I would not just say the Children's Commissioner; I think one has to as an overall picture of cuts to the budget of Children's Services as well and, yes, we are concerned. Some of the problems we face are as a result of that.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

No, that is interesting. Thank you, and I think did you have a question you wanted to ask?

The Connétable of Grouville:

We have run out of time.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, Natalie.

Senior Policy Officer:

It is just to say the Office of the Children's Commissioner is funded centrally from Cabinet Office as opposed to the Minister's budget.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, not from us.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

No, I know that but because we are talking about children's welfare I wondered if you had concerns there.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We had a little discussion about that the other day but ... yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. No, that is interesting. Thank you very much. I think we have finished exactly on time.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Thank you very much.

The Connétable of Grouville:

We are 15 seconds early. Not getting value for money, are we.

[14:29]