



# Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

## Quarterly Public Hearing

### Witness: The Minister for Children and Families

Thursday, 7th March 2024

**Panel:**

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

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.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

Mr. R. Sainsbury, Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department

Ms. F. Cisneros, Interim Director, Children's Services

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

[11:59]

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

Welcome to this quarterly hearing of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. Today is 7th March. I would like to draw everyone's attention to the following. This hearing will be filmed and streamed live. The recording and transcript will be published afterwards on the States Assembly website. All electronic devices, including mobile phones, should be switched to silent.

[12:00]

So if we start with introductions, I am Deputy Catherine Curtis. I am the Chair of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel.

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

I am Deputy Porée and I am a member of this panel.

**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.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

Rob Sainsbury, Chief Officer for the Department of C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills).

**Associate Director, Mental Health and Well-being:**

Darren Bowring, Associate Director for Mental Health and Well-being.

**Interim Director, Children's Services:**

Fi Cisneros, Interim Director for children's social care.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay. Thank you, everyone. We have one hour for this hearing and if I start the questions, it is about ministerial priorities. The first question is about the new children's homes, the most recent children's homes. During your appointment speech in the States Chamber on 30th January, Minister, you stated that you wanted to work with the Minister responsible for planning to rectify planning issues relating to children's care homes. So please can you provide an update about this?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes. Well, we had retrospective planning applications on those 2 children's homes. Since that debate the Planning Committee has met. Now, one of the homes successfully has got the planning permission that we requested, but the other has not. Therefore, we will be appealing that decision on the basis that we feel, certainly I feel, that there should have been consideration as a corporate parent in respect of the evidence that was given and that the care of the child should have been equally weighted against any other matters that were brought as evidence. I feel that certainly as a corporate parent possibly that was not the case.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

It does sound like that. Are there children there at the moment?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

There is. There are children there at the moment and it would be extremely disruptive and it would not be beneficial to them if they had to move premises again.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Do you know when you might get a result to that appeal?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

We do not because it has to come up to a planning appeal. I believe it may be one where a U.K. (United Kingdom) planning inspector is asked to look at the matter. If that is the case, the U.K. planning ... my knowledge of that process is that the U.K. planning inspector will very much look at the Planning Regulations rather than any other evidence that might have been given, and that gives me some comfort that hopefully we might get a different decision.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That is really interesting, the role of the corporate parent now particularly. Just moving on, you also mentioned changing the support offered to vulnerable children and those who need to be taken into care. I think you said you wanted to make a substantial change. So can you advise on any of those plans?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

I am trying to think ... I am thinking back to that speech.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

It was: "I want to make a substantial change to how we view and support vulnerable children and those who need to be taken into care".

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes. Yes, the big difference there is that I want to see an extension of the fostering and adoption services. I think a lot was made that we had opened 2 new children's homes but is that the correct thing that we should be aiming for. In one way our long-term vision should be that we reduce the number of children's homes and encourage more people to come forward to foster. That means that we need to improve the package. We need to care for our foster carers, in effect, and we need them to wish to stay as foster parents. Because I think that is a much better environment for children. As good as any children's home can be, and I have been to see a number of them, it is not the same

as having a family. We see that from care leavers. If you are with a family you pick up various things about family life, which does not happen if you are in care and leave as a care leaver. That jump to independence is a much bigger gap than for a child that has been with a family.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes, I really appreciate that. I think you know I used to do fostering myself so it is lovely for children to be part of a family and being able to keep in touch with their own family as well.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

I would say we have got a much better relationship with the fostering association. I think you would agree, Rob, that we have much more positive meetings with them and there is ... all of us want to see an improvement in their conditions.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes. That is good. That leads on to my next question, which was that you had mentioned in your speech that you would like to see more support and minimise red tape for foster carers. So is there any specific support?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

I think one thing we saw was they seem to have more than their fair share of problems, perhaps, when they are reclaiming their expenses. That is partly due to our government systems. That is not a fostering only problem but, of course, we had problems with the new payment system. They were heavily impacted by that. We cannot see foster carers not being paid or waiting extended periods to get money back. They are doing a fantastic service and that is part of the red tape. I want to make life for them as easy as possible.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay. You advised the Assembly that there would be 11 new foster carers this year, so do you know how many there are in total?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

I do not know if someone can help me with the ...

**Interim Director, Children's Services:**

We have 54 foster families and this week alone we have approved 4 more foster carers. They have been through, as you will recall, the skills to foster training. So we had 3 last month and 4 this month, so that is extraordinarily good, I suggest. We are really hoping to recruit more and more foster carers for our children for the reasons Minister Vibert pointed out.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes, that is good. Just as an add-on question, was there any progress in getting the more intensive foster carers for the children who need someone with them all the time, more or less?

**Interim Director, Children's Services:**

Do you want me to ...?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes, if you could.

**Interim Director, Children's Services:**

Our training programme ... this is a dilemma across the U.K. and here. Looking for specialist foster carers is a scheme like the Mockingbird, which we are looking to bring through to Jersey, which has a variety of constellations where they support each other. So that is something that we are considering. We want to make it right for Jersey. But the training for our foster carers we have looked at. We have uplifted. We have put more specific training for children because we understand the children of Jersey ... there is an increase in children with neuro-divergent needs so we are training our foster carers in that area. So rather than have 10 who are intensive and specialist, we are looking across the board at the training offer and the support that we offer our foster carers.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay. Thanks. The panel noted that during your speech you shared the aim to reduce secure care orders and possibly phase them out even. So can you provide some more information about this plan?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes. Secure care orders, where the child is placed in care, in effect, for their own safety, I would hope that in the future we can accommodate some of that in some of our existing care homes. We also have to look really at the causes of why that child is not secure and look at perhaps the people that are involved in causing that rather than saying the child is not safe because of XYZ. We should be looking at XYZ and what we can do to remove that threat. I was perhaps inspired on this because that was very much the sort of ethos when we went to the Isle of Man. They look at the perpetrators, et cetera, rather than putting a child on a secure care order. When we went to their secure children's home I think they had not had a secure care order for 2 years.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

Yes.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes. They had been very successful and we need to learn more from them. We are engaged with the charity that runs the Isle of Man children's homes and their secure unit, and I will be looking to improve that relationship with them and build on that because I think there are important lessons we can learn.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

Just to add to that, Minister, so in 2023 we have seen a reduction in secure care pathways to the home. We can share that with the panel. There is a notable change over the last 2 years particularly, where we have seen fewer children on a care protection order going into Greenfields but we have seen, unusually, a high number of children going into Greenfields with a custodial pathway. So we are obviously looking at that but, as the Minister says, our approach is really building on what we can do to avoid using care protection orders where the pathway that we need to explore and what we need to do in terms of the contextual work is often with adult services and wider services. We have learnt a lot, I think, in the last 2 years with that pathway. The Children's Commissioner has been very helpful. The work that the Children's Commissioner has focused on in terms of the care and protection pathway has helped us in our thinking in that space as well.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay. So this is taking a much more holistic view?

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

Yes. It became a height of ... it seems that we had a high number of children going into that pathway, particularly during COVID and in the preceding years around that, but we have seen a definite decline. We think as practice gets stronger we would expect to see that continue.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

I was just going to jump in quickly and ask how many children have you got currently in Greenfields, if any at all?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

We are only allowed to say that it is under 5.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

All right, which it would normally ...

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay. Moving on to Greenfields, can you provide an update on any plans for Greenfields?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Well, we have gone through a process of improving the facility, and in a minute Rob will maybe tell you a bit more about that, but my personal view is that it needs a redesign even if it is there for mainly custodials. I go back to ... I have to say I did learn a lot from going to the secure unit in the Isle of Man in that their building is contemporary with ours but the design is totally different. They have, for instance, a number of ... it is really in 3 units, which they can ... at any time they could, for instance, if they needed to separate somebody on a care order and a custodial, they can close certain doors and it is a self-contained, 2-unit ...

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

To separate?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes, for 2 people, with its own kitchen, access to the gym. They are able to do that in modules. What I did see is that they had a kitchen in each unit and, therefore, for instance, the people that were there on custodials were cooking the meal every evening for themselves and the staff.

[12:15]

They left there with qualifications in food preparation, things that we are not able to do. They had a workshop where they could undertake a variety of tasks; in fact, really what interested them. There was one person there that was interested in repairing bikes. They had somebody who came in to teach him how to do that. They had another one who was doing woodworking. We just have not got that. They leave with the ability to go on to get a job, and I think that is ... we are not providing that and the building is not built for that, sadly. Its design was very different. But I do see that that is what I would like to work towards. We have quite a lot of other things we have to do, but I would like to work towards redesigning that building so that it can serve the purpose where, when somebody enters there, we are working towards the day that they are released and they can leave there with some skills that are useful for the rest of their lifetime.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes. When we visited Greenfields I think we were quite impressed with the team, but at the time they did not have the educational facilities they wanted to offer. I think there has been some improvement. We did not like the cell doors, did we?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

No. Sadly, although we got new doors, due to the engineering involved in the original doors we cannot change them over.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Oh, no.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

That is why I say the building needs ... I would like to see each - I will not call them cells - room slightly larger. The building needs a complete redesign but I think, having been through the recent planning committees with the children's homes, that you would have to do that on the existing site. If you attempted to move it anywhere else we would have the same problems that we have had with those 2 recent applications.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Right, so maybe like a redesign of the building where it is?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes, and I have asked St. Christopher's to start looking at that for us. They are the people who run the Isle of Man children's home on behalf of the Government. So that is one of the things I have asked them to look at is that they could do a very draft version of how they think we could redesign that space.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

So there is some work progressing already on it?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay. Great.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

We just need the money.



**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes. Oh, well. So, thanks for that. Minister, in your speech you also committed to work with the C.Y.P.E.S. Department to develop an understanding of why some children are missing from school for long periods of time. Please can you inform the panel what the scale of the problem is in Jersey and what work is being done to take it forward?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

We know about ... I have not got the numbers off my head of the number of children that go missing from school but ... do we have those or can we ...?

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

We can provide the panel with that. It is significant.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

We can provide those. It is significant and one does worry what these children are doing when they are not at school. Where are they? Who do they meet with? Are they then drawn into criminal activity? There is ongoing work to ... there had been ongoing work to look at that. I think we need an even greater understanding of that. Of course, we need to link in with Education, who are now separate but closely linked with us. It is early days for me to be able to say have we made any progress, but we are pursuing that.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

One of the issues that we had had is in relation to capture because we have identified through changes with coding with our S.I.M. (Student Information Management) system that we also need to capture children who are on part-time timetables. So there are exclusions. There are children who do not attend and then there are children who are on a restricted timetable as well. So all of those domains form in part of the education reform programme and the inclusion charter particularly. So our Associate Director in that service is working closely with our C.A.M.H.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and our Children's Services to think about how we change that.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

So you can differentiate?

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

Yes. We also have our intensive youth support service, which has a dedicated education element, low numbers at the moment for children who are accessing that, but it is becoming quite successful with the education part. All of the children, so there have been 12, I think, in the first ... well, in the

caseload, they have all been attending their education requirements and sitting exams. They would have all been children who would have previously not attended school. So we need to build on that.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

That is the interesting part of that service in that we have children who previously were children who went missing, who turn up daily.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

Yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

So they go to a particular place, do they?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

Yes, it is at Highlands.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

It is run by the Youth Service.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

Yes, that Mark Capern leads.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes, and I think they can leave there again with skills, useful skills. They will turn up there but have been missing from school.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Because it is different, I suppose.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes, a different approach.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay. That is good. That is quite new, this particular one?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

It has been running ... last year was the first year. The team has still been forming and we have recently appointed a new team manager to the service. We are looking to build numbers, to increase them, but one of the benefits with the through life learning component of the department now and Skills Jersey and Highlands with its proximity is that we are looking to change the vocational pathways so that for children who will be accessing education is there a way of having a fast track to both academic and whether or not there are vocational routes. Because often those children are finding interest in the vocational routes through the Professional Development Centre (PDC). We want to build on that and that is one of the areas that I know the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning is wanting to support through that skills and Highlands component. So it is where our services connect, I guess.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Did you say that was to do with the Youth Service as well?

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

Yes. The service is led by Mark Capern, who is the Associate Director for the service. It works closely with Fi's service and with Darren. Probation are involved and Health are involved. There is more work we need to do around the specification because the service is set up as an alternative to education and an alternative to care service, but there is a bit more we feel we need to do around how we get that spec right and build on it, really. This has been a learning period for us. We have had a lot of valuable feedback about it.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

I think the fact that we have 12 children in the first year is quite an achievement when you consider none of those were wanting to attend school.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay, that is great. Thank you for that. We are going to move on now to online safety.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Online safety.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes. So, Minister, will consideration of online safety for children and young people feature in your plan of work for this term of office?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes, it certainly will, but that is not to say that we do not already do work in that area. I think it was during COVID that ... and it was the Education Department, but the learning at home website was set up, which gives families and young people a lot of information on digital safety. So there is something out there. There is another document from Education that I think has been around since 2018 that has been updated, again giving extensive information on what you should look out for, for online safety at home, the way children interact with the internet and what they might be picking up from that, telling families to talk with their children about how they are using the internet and set up rules, also look at some of the content with them together so that ... yes. There are other sites. There is a site ... one of those we tell is ThinkUKnow, which is an online safety education programme from the National Crime Agency. I think schools use this as well. So yes, there is active work there. I know it is a very topical thing at the moment and another area that we cannot lose focus on. So hopefully we can give a further update in another scrutiny session.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

Yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes. That is mainly about giving out information and so on.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Do you think that is sufficient? Do you think we need more than that possibly?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Well, I think it is a broad subject which includes things like online bullying. It is an area that needs focus. It is not one that I am totally familiar with at the moment but I will address that. If I think there are shortfalls, then I am the first one who will want to put something in place to address that.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That is good because it seems like a big problem for young people, is it not?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

It is and we will work with Education on that.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

Yes. I think it is likely to be an area of focus from the Safeguarding Partnership Board as well. There has been a dedicated focus on exploitation and online safety is an element, and also the harmful sexual behaviour work with the N.S.P.C.C. (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children). So I think it is likely that there will be cross-agency focus that also considers the online element in relation to all of this.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

There are also other aspects of online safety for children in the area of harm and that is a big one, so it is good to hear that the Minister wants to focus on that really, self-harm or harming others.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

It is not only the internet, it is things like mobile phones and ... it is a big subject now.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Families:**

There are lots of technological solutions that parents can put in place in terms of blocking harmful content, bearing in mind that lots of younger people have mobile phones and can probably more freely access that sort of information. There are lots of technological solutions that parents can put in place, but obviously it is about education and awareness.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

A lot of those things are really good for younger children. It gets more difficult I think when they are 13, 14, 15 and so on, does it not?

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

I was going to say that, yes. It is important that parents are educated, but ultimately as a Government we need to tackle that a little bit more and not leave it to the parents to sort for their children.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes. You have answered quite a few of the questions I had down here already, but we have been taking a particular interest in what will happen in the U.K. following the passing of the Online Safety Act. So there seems to be quite a lot of protections in that Act for children when they are online. I do not know how this would affect Jersey. The panel understands that the protection will not extend to the Crown Dependencies. It would possibly affect the websites children are going to look at anyway, but for Jersey itself has this been looked at? Has it been considered?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes, it is. There was a decision not to be included under the U.K. legislation back in 2022 and that instead we would develop and update our own legislation, which includes the Violence Against Women and Girls report recommendations. There is ongoing work. I thought this fell into the Home Affairs ministry and I am almost certain it does, but somebody suggested that it is also part of Sustainable Economic Development, but I am not certain about that. I certainly know that the recommendations of the Violence Against Women and Girls is certainly being taken up by Home Affairs. We just need to establish exactly who is responsible for that legislation. I cannot believe it is not Home Affairs.

[12:30]

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Well, this was in our next question as well, which was: will there be a specific ministerial responsibility for online safety? If so, which ministry will it come from? Because it does cross, does it not? There is the digital economy, cybersecurity, as you said the safeguarding under Home Affairs as well, but then also, of course, to children. So do you know if there will be a decision on ministerial responsibility for online safety?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

That I do not know at the moment so we will have to come back to you on that.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes. Okay, thanks. So, Minister, are there any other areas that we have not discussed that you are considering as a main priority for your workload going forward?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Well, there is obviously new legislation coming forward. There is the Children and Young People Law, which we debate on 19th March. That will be the Appointed Day Act, so that will become law. Then we have the Adoption and Children and Civil Status Law which will give same-sex couples the same rights as other parents to appear on birth certificates and all the related matters to that. So there is legislation. I think we have covered many of the areas. I have been involved in the C.S.P. (Common Strategic Policy). Obviously, I cannot say what is in that at the moment but I have been involved in that as well. I have C.A.M.H.S. within my remit as well and I intend to work closely with them, closer perhaps than I had been before. You will be aware of recent discussions about A.D.H.D. (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) and medication, and associated with that, of course, was the therapeutic centre or therapeutic children's home now. We have very recently ...

following a review it was deemed that the building was not suitable for conversion into a children's home. This meeting, in fact, makes it public that we are not going forward with the purchase of that home.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That is a shame.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Which is a shame but it also gives us the opportunity to consider whether we should not be providing therapeutic care in all our homes. That is not to say that the original plan is ... at this point there is no set decision, but there is evidence out there that we should be providing some of that care in every home. So it gives us a chance to reset things and decide what the policy should be. As I say, yes, it is very recent that that has happened. I had to advise some of the other Members about it, so I feel it is fair that we should advise you of that, that unfortunately that particular building has not gone ahead.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

So you do not think sometimes it might be necessary for children to have more one to one care away from other ...?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes, I still think that that is necessary. I think it does give us the opportunity, though, to look at the overall therapeutic package because there are so many different therapies that children could need. So we need to look at what we provide in all our homes as well as one to one service as well.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay. I think that was a question you were going to ask later as well, was it not?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Oh, sorry.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

I can always ask again **[Laughter]** just to refresh our memories.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

So those are some of the other things that I will be looking at.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay. Thank you. You mentioned the C.S.P. Do you know when that will be ready for publication?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Well, obviously that is not in my own ... you mean the complete C.S.P., yes?

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

I do not have a date at this point. We have not got a date, have we, Malcolm? But we are involved in the discussions about the C.S.P.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay, so it might be quite soon then?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

I would hope so.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes. Also just to check something, skills, is that going to ...?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

No, skills has gone to Education, yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay. All right. So could you confirm whether the Government will publish an updated list of ministerial responsibilities, which will show the splits between your ministry and that of the Minister for Education?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

I believe, yes, that we will provide that split. At a very high level, the Minister for Children and Families is children's social care, integrated services and young people's services. Now, the young people's services I have delegated responsibility to Malcolm, so he has, in effect, got his own sub-portfolio and he has already started. Then education, we have education itself, the library service and skills.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**



Right, okay. There are other things like nursery education and nursery care and things like that and we need to see where that ...

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

That falls into education, yes.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

We can share the ...

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes, we have something we can share with you.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Oh, great.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

That has all the sub ... I will not read them all out at this point but we have everything in there. If we can send you that, then you will know the exact split.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes, that would be great. Thank you. Okay, that is my questions for now.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

I am going to be asking now a few questions to the Minister and yourself about C.A.M.H.S. So the first is for you, Minister. It was mentioned in the previous hearing that the annual report for C.A.M.H.S., and I quote: "will be completed in quarter 1 next year with much richer data". Can you inform the panel of the progress with the 2023 annual report and please confirm when it will be published?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Now, I believe, Darren, that you are very close to completing that?

**Associate Director, Mental Health and Well-being:**

Yes. The report is completed in draft form. As we promised, a lot of work was done last year on improving the data and analysis and feedback that C.A.M.H.S. receive. We worked with the Child Outcome Research Consortium, C.O.R.C., to develop a number of different tools. So that data is included. I have written the draft report with colleagues. It is currently with our comms colleagues

for formatting and proofreading, and hopefully by the end of next week it will be at the Chief Officer for approval. So we are on track to publish this month, which will be in quarter 1 as was promised.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

That is really good news, so yes, that is work well done.

**Associate Director, Mental Health and Well-being:**

Thank you.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Okay. How has C.A.M.H.S. been impacted by the delays of the new facility at Clinique Pinel? Has it been impacted at all?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

I think I can ask Darren to provide the answer. He has briefed me but I think he can provide a more extensive ...

**Associate Director, Mental Health and Well-being:**

Yes. I guess last year we had the lowest number of admissions for a number of years to Orchard House. So older young people who are experiencing a level of risk and mental health concern have historically attended Orchard House, which is not ideal as an adult ward. So as you are aware, we are very keen for the Clinique Pinel to be developed where there will be more bespoke and individual units that older young people can be supported. I understand that it is delayed now until April, Clinique Pinel. In the meantime, if we have any admissions they are supported by C.A.M.H.S. staff and where possible we use separate areas of Orchard House for those young people. So there are mitigations in place. All young people are well cared for and supported if they should be placed at Orchard House. Obviously, once Clinique Pinel opens, we will have a much better environment to do that.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

They are also sent to Robin Ward still, are they not?

**Associate Director, Mental Health and Well-being:**

Younger people, yes, particularly if there are medical concerns as well where you need ... physical health concerns. Orchard House has always been for older young people aged 16 to 17 who may need mental health treatment, which will be predominantly what we would be looking at for Clinique Pinel. Sometimes obviously, though, young people appear at hospital with mental health needs but there is also physical health treatment related to potential overdoses or self-harm. So they require

some period of stay in hospital for those physical care needs as well as the mental health support. Obviously, younger children would not go to Clinique Pinel. They would remain cared for in the General Hospital.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Okay. So what you are saying is Orchard House presently is housing the young people?

**Associate Director, Mental Health and Well-being:**

Yes.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

While Clinique Pinel work carries on?

**Associate Director, Mental Health and Well-being:**

Yes.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Okay. Thank you. So with reference to the recent inspection report published by the Jersey Care Commission, the panel noted that they reported, and again I quote: "many changes and improvements over the past 3 years" but suggested recommendations and highlighted 12 areas where improvements could be made. Can you please give the panel an overview of how and if these improvements will be taken forward in C.A.M.H.S.?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Right. So all 12 of the recommendations are being taken forward; 8 have already been completed. So I think that is excellent progress. The M.O.U. (memorandum of understanding) between H.C.S. (Health and Community Services) and C.Y.P.E.S., that is in draft form at the moment but the deadline for completion is within the next 6 months. C.A.M.H.S. staff having access to the relevant policies, that has been completed. Having a transparent complaints procedure, again that has been completed. Young people to self-refer, the deadline for completion on this one is 12 months. Now, one has to think about self-referral and there needs to be a balance between ... you need the systems and services available for young people to self-refer. At the same time you need to ensure that because they will still be under the care of their G.P. (general practitioner), the G.P. in some way needs to be referred to as well. There are possible other healthcare personnel. There is a fair amount of work required to get that self-referral process delivered and working correctly. Young people awaiting assessment to receive written communication, that has been completed. Shared prescribing of A.D.H.D. medication, there is some of that that is slightly outside our control. The application for that had to involve the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee and was

considered in the last few days. I do not know whether we have had the outcome of that yet. Have you ... no, we have not had an update from them yet, so we are still awaiting a decision on that. So that one is ongoing work but some of it is outside our control.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Do they ask G.P.s as well for their opinion on that, do you know, in that process?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

I would have thought so because, in effect, we are asking the G.P.s to be able to and without the approval of that board the G.P.s cannot prescribe.

[12:45]

So, we are in their hands on that one. Add additional information to the welcome pack, that is being addressed at the moment. Clinical data not used to enhance the service, well, C.A.M.H.S. has worked on this and that is actually completed. Police protocol, I think that was perhaps a surprising one. Nevertheless, we are working to clarify working arrangements with the police, and the deadline for that one is within the next 12 months. So that is the 4th one that still needs completing. Number 10 was C.A.M.H.S. does have a formalised local process for learning from serious untoward incidents and addressing complaints, so that has been completed. Inconsistencies in staff training, that was completed. Reception staff handling incoming calls in reception area where discussions involving sensitive information may occur over the phone, that was an issue that needed addressing and has been completed. So there are 4 items that are ongoing and require completion. Hopefully we can update you again at the next scrutiny.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

That would be great, Minister, if you could, yes.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes, but I think that is excellent progress. I have to thank Darren for that. Thank you very much.

**Associate Director, Mental Health and Well-being:**

That is okay.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Thank you. The panel also noted another suggested improvement mentioned in the report and that was that the service could be flexible and, therefore, take in young people up to the age of 25 because obviously there are still quite a lot of young people affected by it. Could you advise if that

number is under consideration at the moment still and, if so, how it has been developing at the moment?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

I might have to ask Darren on this one.

**Associate Director, Mental Health and Well-being:**

Okay. A lot of work has taken place over the last 2 years in terms of a transition between C.A.M.H.S. and adult services. All young people who are open to C.A.M.H.S. aged 17½ get taken to our transition meeting and an agreed plan is made for that transition to adult services, which is working particularly well. There has also been some investment into additional positions to support that navigation between C.A.M.H.S. services and adult services. So, that seems to be working. As of yesterday when I checked we currently have 75 young people over the age of 18 still open to us as a service and what we have tried to be is to be flexible in a transition anyway. For example, if a young person is making very good progress with the clinician in C.A.M.H.S., we would not rush to transition. If they are due another transition, such as going to university and they have turned 18, we would not necessarily transition if it was not a helpful time. So, we have tried already within our existing systems to be flexible and not have that direct cut-off at 18, and where we do need to move people off, we have got very good and efficient working relationships to transition. So, my personal opinion is that our current systems are working well. I am not aware of any feedback from young people to say that a change in cut-off age would be of benefit, but it is obviously an opinion expressed by, I think, some of the U.K.-based inspectors because that is more common in the U.K. I am sure it is something we can discuss with our adult colleagues and reflect on, but certainly in terms of the number of things we do in C.A.M.H.S, I do not believe it is an immediate priority with some of our other areas.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

I think that one of the main differences is when it comes to referral and then the diagnosis and the time that takes. So when you are under the age of 18, you get it much quicker because of that. You are still a child. Over 18, the time of waiting could be a year, 2 years. So that is really important and it can be very damaging for people. If you are 19, therefore, your waiting list is going to be much longer and, therefore, that will impact much worse on your mental health moving forward. So, the waiting list is really important and where that cut-off has got great impact. So it would be good to carry on looking into it because that is a big issue.

**Associate Director, Mental Health and Well-being:**

Yes, I agree and there is a difference in waiting times, particularly in neurodevelopmental areas. I can see that that is an issue. What I do hope ... the fact that we had 799 referrals to C.A.M.H.S.

last year for neurodevelopmental assessments out of 15,000 children at education, schools are getting much better at recognising the features of neurodiversity. So I hope as times go on we are not getting young adults who have not been picked up for neurodevelopmental assessments and we are getting to a stage where adults are looking for those assessments and as an Island we get better at getting them done while they are children and support and adaptations can be put in place while they are going through those formative years and, really importantly, around education, so we are maximising learning and exam outcomes as well.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Thank you. Okay, so my next question now will be about some particular work that could be done. For instance, the approach of ... the particular benefit of certain patients, for instance, for those with A.D.H.D. issues, how are you looking into supporting them further? Have you got any plans at the moment or are you giving them special supports?

**Associate Director, Mental Health and Well-being:**

Yes, so as you are aware, the pressures for A.D.H.D. referrals have been really high and there has been lots of news articles this week. We are in a very similar position to lots of other U.K. services and even internationally that recognition of A.D.H.D. features has improved and lots of services are getting referrals. We are working really hard to keep waiting times low. We have had an additional locum psychiatrist working with us since last October, solely focussed on doing A.D.H.D. assessments. That is helping us maintain a reasonable waiting time, although we hope to do much better for that. We have also got other existing staff that we are training up to complete A.D.H.D. assessments; we have 2 nurse prescribers and we are hoping to develop additional nurse prescribers to help with the medication and prescription and monitoring of the treatment aspects as well. Our neurodevelopmental service now also has a welcome event, so when any young people and their families are referred to our neurodevelopmental pathway, within the first month there is a welcome event where they get lots of support, information, and to meet some of the staff and to explain how the pathway works. We have introduced drop-in clinics on a regular basis as well, where they can meet key staff to get support. We have New Forest Parenting Program for families and carers on A.D.H.D. Our early intervention service have run training for schools as well on A.D.H.D. and we also have Decider Skills and other support from our clinicians and our therapists to work with young children and young people as well to support themselves with A.D.H.D. So, we have improved the offer. We want to do more and obviously the volume makes that quite difficult to do it on an individual basis, but it is something that Toni Cooper, who is our Neurodevelopmental Manager, is working really hard to improve.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

It is a matter of balancing that demand with the service provided and making sure you catch people at the right time.

**Associate Director, Mental Health and Well-being:**

Absolutely. What we are trying to avoid doing is ... you will note from the national articles this week, a lot of U.K. providers are putting in thresholds for access and diagnostic assessments because of the volume of referrals. We are not doing that, but that remains a real challenge to get through all the work promptly and to have enough clinical staff to provide support for children and families where it is required.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Thank you.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

Can I just add that Darren has undertaken a very detailed analysis of the demand and the capacity, and so we are obviously at an early part of the year in terms of understanding the financial position, but we believe that we have identified the potential for further investment into the service. We are looking at around £400,000 this year to support how we can further address that assessment and waiting list pressure and then we will obviously need to make sure that Darren and the service are then supported with ongoing support after, so that we are not just focussed on the assessment element. So, in all of those things that have been mentioned, we will have to look at that as well. But it looks like we will be able to provide further investment in that space, which will be good.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Great. That would be appreciated, thank you.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

I think that has already been answered, that one.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

In fact, the next one about the therapeutic home we have already discussed. Now we are on to Children's Services. The Jersey Care Commission published a report on Children's Social Care Service and identified 7 areas for improvement. Can you advise the panel on how these recommendations are being addressed?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

The inspection that we had from the Jersey Care Commission, they actually made 8 recommendations; 2 have already been implemented. If I go through them, one was recommendation 1 to reframe the negative historical narrative of public and partner organisations of children's social work. Well, that is very much part of a communications programme and to change that perception which is ... you know, it is across the public of the Island, which makes it quite difficult because there have been massive changes in children's social services and I feel for them that there is still that perception that ...

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

It will take a long time, I suppose.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes, it is going to take some time but, in effect, we are taking action and that is one of those that is classed as being fully implemented, but in fact it is ongoing. "The development of an infrastructure and capacity required to implement the change and reform programme successfully," well, that has been implemented. "The development and implementation of an effective quality assurance framework," that has been developed and now the service is going through an embedding stage. Number 4: "To improve the stability and sustainability of the workforce at all levels." There are a number of vacancies that are still being advertised, but we have greatly improved the stability of the workforce and I think the levels of ... we were down to something like 40-something per cent at some stage, weren't we, of permanent employees? We have got that above 60 now.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Can I just ask you on that one - it was part of the next question - we heard that retention fees were being provided to substantive social workers, so that will have helped, presumably?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

That has helped, yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes, and I think that is recognition that we need to stabilise and we need to keep people that are already playing a valuable role in the service. So, yes, and that has been successful. So: "Focus on the period before legal proceedings commence, pre-proceedings, to secure early permanent



plans and process to review ... avoid unnecessary delays and create security for children.” That is part of our improvement programme, so that is ongoing. “Radical review of missing from home and care processes to ensure information is systematically collected.” That is part of our improvement programme, but we actually touched on that when we were looking at missing children. So we have got quite a focus on that. “Children’s Social Care to collaborate with health partners to ensure that review of health assessments are timely and initial health assessments are of high quality when children first become looked after.” Again, that is part of our improvement programme. Then we have got ... item 8 was, in fact, about our internal review programme, or internal review officers.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

Independent reviewing officers.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Independent, yes, independent review officers. But they are actually internal, aren’t they?

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

Yes, and we have implemented this.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

They are like internal auditors of the system. So, there needs to be evidence of sustained improvement in the delivery of the I.R.O. (independent reviewing officer) function and, in fact, that has already been implemented. So that was the 2nd, yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That has been going for a few years now, hasn’t it, the I.R.O.?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department:**

It has. It would probably be helpful if Fi expands because there is a lot of work and I think it would be helpful to outline that ... we have our first fostering I.R.O. role as well. We have never had that before, so ...

[13:00]

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes.

**Interim Director, Children's Services:**

Just an in-post, permanent member of staff starting on 1st April. I spoke to her this morning; she is very excited about that. That is part of our development. I could expand on all of them, but I imagine there will not be time.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Can I just say we have actually come to the end of our time? Is it okay to carry on a little bit longer?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes, if we can carry on for Fi to finish. Yes, we can do that.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay.

**Interim Director, Children's Services:**

I think it is really worthwhile me pointing out, when we are looking at the pre-proceedings, we know that today we have 65 children in our care and we have children who are in care proceedings. What we don't ... sorry, you just nodded. Was that something I ... the number?

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

No, no. Just carry on.

**[Laughter]**

**Interim Director, Children's Services:**

All right. Okay. Compared to our statistical neighbours, that is something we are looking at. We are low. We understand that the pre-proceedings here in Jersey has been a little delayed. So we now have processes in place when children are part of a child protection plan, if that plan stops and the risk is still there, still maintained, then we are looking for legal advice. That is part of the pre-proceedings process, which offers grip because we do not want children living at risk of harm here in Jersey and we want to make sure that we are with the family in a restorative way, working with everything that surrounds a family, to support them to parent in a more effective, loving home which offers education, warmth and all of the areas that children need. So, that has real grip now. We are looking at making sure that children are living in the right place at the right time, free of harm and risk. The I.R.O.s, they do come under Children's Social Care, but they are very much independent. They sit in Quality Assurance and they are there as our objective critiques, if you like. So we get a monthly report from them, which gives us information about what we are doing well, what we are

not, and how we can impact more on the life of children with child protection plans and children in our care. So, the actual improvement plan that has been scripted, of which there are 7 areas, I am really, really impressed by all of the areas of which we are all part of and have ownership of. We are really looking at the children of Jersey and the young people and the families, and we are moving at pace to address their needs, which will help with the narrative around what social care ... the historical narrative, because we are our best advocates for a good reputation here in Jersey and we want to work to such a high standard that we do not talk about the narrative ongoingly, yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes, so hopefully that will change, yes. Just to check, those I.R.O. monthly reports, that has been happening over the previous years, then?

**Interim Director, Children's Services:**

Yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay. We have quite a lot more questions, but I think we have run out of time, so can we...

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

I know Malcolm might just like to tell you about the St. Helier youth centre. Can he do that?

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Oh, yes.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Can we ask questions then around that?

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That was one of our pots for questions.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Because I have specifically tasked him with ...

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Would you want to give us a bit of an update...

**Assistant Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes, okay.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

... and then if we can also send you written questions to follow up?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes, sure. As the Minister mentioned earlier, I have been given responsibility for young people's services and without going through the whole list, the headlines that that covers is: Jersey Youth Service, Jersey Youth Parliament, L.G.B.T.Q. (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer) Youth Project, Young Carers, Outdoor Learning and the Youth Inquiry Service, which is a really important function to get good quality information to young people in a really accessible way. But something that the Minister has particularly given me responsibility for is a youth centre in St. Helier. There are a number of sites that are possibilities; there are 1 or 2 favoured sites that we need to look at more closely. So, what I am going to be doing in the next 2½ years, I think we have to be realistic, if we can earmark the monies for it through the Government Plan with the growth bid and if we can get at least planning permission for the site, that would be a win, if we can get that in place inside the next 2½ years. I have already set up meetings with various people who are key players, to get this rolling. We are ideally looking for a site, perhaps near Millennium Park, certainly within the ring road, because it is fair to say that St. Helier obviously has the biggest population of children as well as the biggest population in the Island, and while there are some pockets of excellence around the Island in different centres and different youth centres that we have got, St. Helier is still underserved with really good quality, which I am sure both of you have got a great interest in as well.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Of course, and one of the questions we were going to ask the Minister is about your own assessment of the youth services in St. Helier, specifically because of those reasons. The youth of St. Helier are very under-serviced. You did mention there is buildings that have been earmarked, but there is nothing really concrete.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Families:**

Tangible, yes.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

So it makes us think that maybe these next 2 years are just going to be used to plan and then how long are we looking at to come to the point of saying: "Yes, this is the building we have got for the

youth service, for the youth of St. Helier”, or 1 or 2 buildings, actually. And this is where the work ... because at the moment it feels the service is desperately lacking ...

**Assistant Minister for Children and Families:**

It is.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

... and the time is running with it.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes. Even in St. Helier there is still some really good properties and there is some great opportunities for young people, but we need to enhance that service. I give the example of the Youth Inquiry Service. While that is a great building and a really good location, the lease on that building will expire within the next couple of years and that whole area is going to be developed. So, I see the youth service, or the youth centre, as being a youth and community centre, perhaps with the Youth Inquiry Service attached to it, and that would be a really good interplay for young people to either come to the youth centre via that inquiry service and vice versa. The 2 organisations could work really well together. So, it is about finding a suitable site, it is about earmarking the monies that go alongside it, and hopefully having the planning permission in place so that we can certainly be seriously looking at a spade in the ground within the next couple of years.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes, the youth service in St. Helier does fantastic work ...

**Assistant Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

... but there is no youth club.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Families:**

No. Exactly.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

In St. Mary or St. John children can go to the youth club, which is lovely. It is awful that there is not one for St. Helier.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes, they are a really important way of ... you know, they are an early warning place for lots of people to pick up the issues that young people are having and to give them that immediate support and advice and guidance. So, they do play a valuable role in our society. We do recognise that.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

You have mentioned 2 of the parishes there. I think there is a ... there is something of the ... you know, in the rural parishes, the parishes have built those facilities themselves.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Right.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

The Government has not been asked to pay for them. In some cases, I think in most cases, we have had a loan which we have repaid, and that has not happened in the town area.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Well, we have asked many questions in parish meetings ...

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

But I have given this as a specific task to Malcolm, and so it is now clearly on the agenda and I think we will get progress now. We are determined this time to deliver this.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Good.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Yes, because it is interesting. St. Peter is a lovely parish, and it has a fantastic youth club there, hasn't it? Would you be suggesting, at this moment in time, maybe that it is the parish should be coming with the budget?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

I cannot really suggest what, but I think one would hope that there would be a contribution from the parish to the Government for youth facilities. I can only make that, you know, a suggestion.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

There was also money assigned to this, I think, a few years ago ...

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Exactly.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

... by Government as well.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

I do not think that money is there any longer.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Families:**

Firstly, with the rising cost of building ... firstly, that that money is no longer there, but the amount that was earmarked was probably well underestimated and certainly well underestimated for where we are now with building costs.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

I know if we were to build the centre at St. Peter now, we are looking between 3 and 5 million to build that. That puts you in the ballpark of the sort of sums of money we are going to need for St. Helier. I would say you are looking at 5 million plus. That is a personal assessment, but I would be surprised if it is anything less than that.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

But what I would say in that is that it will be money well spent regardless of the amount, because it is a necessary need.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes, absolutely.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Families:**

It is an investment in the community, isn't it?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

But unfortunately the original ... I do not know how much the original amount that was put in the budget was, but sadly that was moved to another project.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Hundreds of thousands, wasn't it?

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

No, you are talking millions.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Families:**

No, it was, yes.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes. We are realistic about the cost and realistic about the planning procedure and getting it, but we are determined that it be delivered.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay, thank you. I think we had probably better end now and ...

**Assistant Minister for Children and Families:**

Thank you.

**The Minister for Children and Families:**

Thank you very much.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Thank you, everyone, and we will send on our small questions we have that we have not got through.

Thank you.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Thank you, and we will definitely be chasing you on that one.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Families:**

Yes. Do not worry, I am on it.