

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHIEF MINISTER  
BY DEPUTY L.M.C. DOUBLET OF ST. SAVIOUR  
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 15th APRIL 2024  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 22nd APRIL 2024**

**Question**

“Further to the recently-lodged [Common Strategic Policy 2024-2026](#), and the priority to “extend nursery and childcare provision”, will the Chief Minister advise –

- (a) regarding the universal offer of nursery care to all children aged 2 to 3 years –
  - (i) the proposed timeline for implementation;
  - (ii) how many hours per child will be offered;
  - (iii) the cost of providing this offer;
  - (iv) whether funding proposals will be included in the Government Plan 2025-2028;
- (b) regarding the extension of nursery care to children aged 2 to 3 years old with additional needs –
  - (i) what additional needs are being considered and whether this includes financial need;
  - (ii) the number of children currently accessing nursery care in each of the last 3 years and the expected number following the extension;
  - (iii) the total funding allocated to this extension; and
- (c) in relation to the pilot scheme to access unused spaces in primary school nurseries –
  - (i) which schools are included in the pilot scheme;
  - (ii) whether changes have been made to the pilot which was under development in 2023 and if so, details of the changes; and
  - (iii) whether this scheme has commenced, and if not, why not?”

**Answer**

- (a) regarding the universal offer of nursery care to all children aged 2 to 3 years –

- (i) the proposed timeline for implementation;

The timeline for a universal offer for all children aged 2-3 years is currently being planned and implementation will be phased. Further work is needed to develop a full understanding of the current capacity within the childcare and early years sector and the providers’ ability to meet the increased demand. It is important to ensure the offer will be of a high standard and is deliverable.

- (ii) how many hours per child will be offered;

From an educational perspective, the optimum number of hours is a part-time offer, between 12 and 20 hours to secure positive outcomes and the desired impact on children’s cognitive, social and linguistic development. This is based on research and both national and local evidence, including the Effective

Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) project and the Study of Early Education and Development (SEED). The provision needs to be sustainable and to represent value for money as well as meeting children's developmental needs.

(iii) the cost of providing this offer;

Costs are yet to be determined in detail. Many variables will influence the cost of a universal provision and one of the benefits of a phased approach is that it will help provide greater certainty over potential costs over a period of time. Variables include the proportion of parents that take up the offer, the number of hours and weeks provided, the cost of provision and whether increments should be added to reflect additional needs.

(iv) whether funding proposals will be included in the Government Plan 2025-2028;

Yes, this will be factored into funding proposals for the Government Plan 2025 – 2028 and is one of the 12 priorities that this Government and Council of Ministers want to initiate as soon as possible.

(b) regarding the extension of nursery care to children aged 2 to 3 years old with additional needs –

(i) what additional needs are being considered and whether this includes financial need;

The term 'additional needs' does not specifically relate to special educational needs, for instance, but can be applied to all aspects of potential vulnerability or perceived potential disadvantage. This will include financial needs. Consideration is already given to families with a range of additional needs through the Best Start Nursery Plus scheme and the Government to expand an already successful initiative in supporting 2–3-year-olds which considers the child's learning needs, the wider financial needs or circumstances of the family and any health or developmental needs.

(ii) the number of children currently accessing nursery care in each of the last 3 years and the expected number following the extension;

An independent childcare provider survey carried out in December 2023-January 2024 showed that 620 places are currently taken up by 2–3-year-olds across all types of childcare providers. This includes nurseries, childminders and nannies. The current number of registered places available in nurseries for this age group is 353 and there is the potential to work with other providers, including childminders to offer more places if required. To meet additional need, work is under way to look at further opportunities to recruit, retain and build capacity. Continued engagement with stakeholders, including parents, will be a key ongoing activity to understand childcare needs in more detail so that provision can be accurately planned.

(iii) the total funding allocated to this extension; and

The funding allocation is yet to be determined and will be considered as part of the Government Plan process.

(c) in relation to the pilot scheme to access unused spaces in primary school nurseries –

(i) which schools are included in the pilot scheme;

A number of schools have shown interest in taking part in a pilot initiative to consider how best their nursery provision can respond to and meet the needs of children and families in their community. Planning is under way with a number of those schools to implement pilot initiatives from September 2024.

(ii) whether changes have been made to the pilot which was under development in 2023 and if so, details of the changes; and

There have been no changes to the pilot.

(iii) whether this scheme has commenced, and if not, why not?"

Scoping for this scheme is in the final stages and was awaiting key data, such as the numbers of children to be admitted to each early years class in September 2024. This information has not been available at an earlier stage but is now being considered to take the scheme forward.