

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING
BY DEPUTY M.B. ANDREWS OF ST HELIER NORTH
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 1st JULY 2024
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON MONDAY 8th JULY 2024**

Question

“In respect of Jersey’s nurseries and other pre-school settings, will the Minister advise –

- (a) what plans, if any, he has to address staff shortages;
- (b) what Government funding, if any, is currently offered to support staff in this sector to obtain childcare qualifications; and
- (c) what consideration, if any, is being given to offering grants to people entitled to work in Jersey (and who are registered as unemployed) to undertake childcare qualifications, and, if this is not being considered, why not?”

Answer

- (a) An early years ‘workforce’ working group was stood up in 2022 to address this issue as we have been monitoring this for some time. Through the work of the [Best Start Partnership](#), a group of key stakeholders enabled the independent publication of the first Childcare Providers Survey at the end of 2023/24. This has given an accurate insight into key themes relating to this sector, including staffing, available places, and registered numbers. We know that in 2023 there was a 78% vacancy rate.

The actions of the group to date have included:

Funding for over 50 new places for students to study Early childhood Education and Care qualifications at Highlands College for both Level 2 and Level 3 pathways.

Support from Skills Jersey to mentor apprentices following this part-time route for a Level 3 qualification.

Working with the childcare industry through the Jersey Early Years Association (JEYA) to enable options to be considered that has allowed nurseries to employ and work with colleagues that might not have the qualification but do have relevant and current experience.

Following proposals from JHEYA members, changes have been made to the work permits that now include ‘nursery practitioner’ as an eligible category. This has enabled a number of Kenyan childcare practitioners to join the childcare workforce. This has been a positive collaboration between JHEYA, and the CYPES Childcare and Early Years Service (CEYS) and a local recruitment company.

Highlands College host and attend regular meetings with the owners and managers of nursery settings to provide direct feedback on student uptake, performance and course content to ensure high quality graduates are entering the sector.

A recruitment campaign is planned to attract people into the sector.

JHEYA, CEYS and the Best Start Partnership have and will continue to attend all secondary school’s careers fairs to target school leavers.

- (b) The Covid Recovery Fund (2022-2024) fully funded all students wanting to study a Level 3 and a Level 2 course at Highlands College.

Recruitment and retention initiatives saw childminders receive up to £500 retention benefit to address cost of living pressures in 2023 and CYPES launched their childminder incentive scheme which covers 'start up costs' for new applicant childminders up to £1,500.

CYPES fully fund all professional development courses that are offered to all early years staff from both nursery settings and schools. This has been possible due to the financial commitment from the Education Reform Programme to direct funding into CPD for the early years sector. To date, £200,000 has been made available and co-ordinated between CEYS and the JCCT to enable and facilitate training. In 2024 this funding has provided access to:

Makaton level 1

MAYBO safer and positive approaches to behaviour in the Early Years

Support for Early Literacy, Communication and Language through Helicopter Stories, A Fresh Approach to Making it REAL and The Drawing Club with Gregg Botterill (an expert off island trainer.

Self-Regulation webinar

SENCO support package

Good Autism Practice

Knowledge Makes Change Seminars – an opportunity to hear from early years specialists and share best local, national and international practice.

The Government has funded the Level 3 Early Years SENCO qualification for all nursery settings to have at least one member of staff trained and qualified to enhance the quality and provision for all children as well as those with SEND.

Eligible applicants can receive government funding for degree level courses such as the BA Hons Childhood Studies offered by University College Jersey, via Student Finance. The Maximum annual grant amounts are £9,250 for course fees and £8,915 for maintenance.

- (c) Back to work teams work with childcare providers to seek suitable opportunities for those seeking a return to the workplace. This does require careful planning and consideration as the needs of young children have to be prioritised and safely and appropriately met. Practitioners require an enhanced DBS check, First Aid training and Safeguarding training in addition to some knowledge of child development. A risk benefit assessment will be undertaken to ensure that any suitable candidates are supported to take up an opportunity, if and when appropriate.

The Registered Childminder 'start-up grant' is currently available to all new applicants which covers all costs associated with becoming a childminder, including the Level 3 qualification in Home-Based care.