

# STATES OF JERSEY



## NURSERY FUNDING: IMPLEMENTATION OF PROPOSED CHANGES

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Lodged au Greffe on 12th April 2016  
by Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade

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STATES GREFFE

## **PROPOSITION**

**THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –**

to request the Minister for Education not to implement proposed changes to Nursery Funding until such time as –

- (a) the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel has fully reviewed the issue and presented its findings and recommendations to the States Assembly; and
- (b) the States has considered and endorsed the Minister's proposals.

DEPUTY M. TADIER OF ST. BRELADE

## REPORT

*“Kids only get one chance after all.”*

– Deputy R.G. Bryans of St. Helier, quoting Kevin Keen in 2014, before his election as Minister.

**This Proposition is supported by, and presented on behalf of, Reform Jersey**

### Introduction

In September 2008, the States approved the increased funding of nursery education. It meant that additional funding was made available to pay for the nursery education of eligible children in registered day care centres in the private and voluntary sector.

As things stand, to be eligible for the scheme –

- Children must become 4 years old between 1st September and 31st August in the year before they are due to start primary school;
- A place must be secured with a nursery provider that is a registered member of the Jersey Early Years and Child Care Partnership.

At the time of its introduction, the Education Department said that there would now be *more choice and more places available* and that *through the partnership between the States of Jersey and the private and voluntary sector nurseries, parents would now have a **greater opportunity** to select the early years education provider they feel best meets their child’s needs and their own requirements.*<sup>1</sup>

Since that time, the current Council of Ministers has issued a [Strategic Plan](#) for the years 2015 – 2018 ([P.27/2015](#)), of which the States approved an amended version on 30th April 2015.

One of the key planks of that plan was ‘to improve education’. Moreover, there was a commitment to the so-called *1001 Days* initiative, which recognised that that the early years of life are a crucial period and are key to brain development, and that they have a strong causative correlation with outcomes later on in life. (This came in the form of an amendment ([P.27/2015 Amd.\(8\)](#)) lodged by Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour, which was unanimously supported by Members).

### Concerns

Like many States Members and members of the Public, Reform Jersey are concerned that the proposals recently put forward by the Minister to cut the provision of free nursery hours to those earning a combined income of over £75,000 a year has not been properly thought through.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 – <http://www.gov.je/news/2009/pages/freenurseryfunding.aspx>

- We are concerned that an arbitrary figure has been selected which seeks to define a household earning a total *gross* income of £75,000 as being high-earners, with no thought being given to other family factors or outgoings, or indeed what the net income of that family might be.
- We are concerned that insufficient consultation has been made with stakeholder groups, including parents and nursery providers, to justify the withdrawal of such a benefit.
- We are concerned that many parents will have already planned financially for the medium term based on the presumption that they will have 20 hours of States-funded nursery care for 38 weeks of the year, and that the withdrawal of this provision will push some of the ‘marginal’ earners into making decisions that may adversely affect them and their children.
- We are strongly of the opinion that these proposals, as they currently stand, are in direct contradiction to the principles agreed in the 2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan, particularly the 1001 Days Strategy.
- We believe that the move is being driven purely as a cost-saving exercise, and not because it is the right thing to do socially.
- We are concerned that it may disproportionately affect working mothers, who may feel particularly pressured to given up full- or part-time work if the free provision is withdrawn.

### **Scrutiny**

Increasingly, we are seeing significant policy being made by Ministerial Decision alone, without coming before the Assembly – even where there is no mandate from the Public or the States for these decisions. The argument is increasingly given ‘you told us to go and make savings, and that is what we are doing’. This is now starting to wear thin.

We are pleased that the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel have decided to look at this important – and emotive – issue. We have attached their terms of reference as **Appendix 2**<sup>2</sup>.

We would hope that Scrutiny would be allowed to conclude its review and that the States, and the Public, be able to consider their findings and any recommendations before any decision is made.

Similarly, we believe that the proposals *should* be brought to the States for approval following the publication of the Scrutiny Review.

### **Financial and manpower implications**

There are no additional financial or manpower implications for the States arising from this proposition.

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<sup>2</sup> **Appendix 2** – <http://www.scrutiny.gov.je/Pages/Review.aspx?ReviewId=238>

## States-funded nursery education – more details

18 March 2009

Parents can now find out more about a new scheme that gives them, for the first time, the opportunity to apply for a **free nursery place** in the private and voluntary sector, rather than solely within States primary school nurseries.

The Education, Sport and Culture Department (ESC) has issued more details of how the new scheme for free nursery education will work when it starts in **September 2009**.

The States approved the increased funding of nursery education in September 2008. It means that from the autumn additional funding will be available to pay for the nursery education of eligible children in registered day care centres in the private and voluntary sector. To be eligible to access a free nursery education place:

- Children must become four years old between 1 September, and 31 August in the year before they are due to start primary school;
- A place must be secured with a nursery provider that is a registered member of the Jersey Early Years and Child Care Partnership.

Education Sport and Culture’s Business Change Manager, Keith Posner, said: ‘Through the partnership between the States of Jersey and the private and voluntary sector nurseries, parents will now have a **greater opportunity** to select the early years education provider they feel best meets their child’s needs and their own requirements.

‘The feedback we have had so far is that parents are pleased that there is **now more choice** and more places available’.

Parents will be able to apply for a maximum of **20 hours free** States-funded nursery education a week during term time, up to five days a week, 38 weeks a year. Families will not be asked to pay in advance, as funding for places will go directly from the States to the registered centre, which could be a pre-school or day nursery.

School holidays and half term breaks are not covered by the scheme, but parents who require longer hours can choose to pay for extra sessions from their nursery provider.

The list of day nurseries and pre-schools which are offering free places can be found at [www.gov.je/nurseryeducation](http://www.gov.je/nurseryeducation). To apply for a funded place, parents should **contact providers directly**.

The school nursery application process is not changing and parents will still be able to apply in the same way. Parents are asked to contact the primary school of their choice. Further details can be found at [www.gov.je/nurseryeducation](http://www.gov.je/nurseryeducation).

States-funded nursery education will focus on pre-school education and will follow the Pre-School Quality Framework, which emphasises learning through play and aims to build key skills as a secure foundation for later learning.

ESC is working closely with the Jersey Early Years Association, the Jersey Child Care Trust, pre-schools and day nurseries to develop details of the scheme, with a view to providing, if possible, a sufficient number of places in September 2009 for all children who reach their fourth birthday between 1 September 2009 and 31 August 2010.

Further information about the scheme including FAQs and an explanation of the different nurseries and a PDF of a recently produced leaflet about the scheme, are available at the States of Jersey website [www.gov.je/nurseryeducation](http://www.gov.je/nurseryeducation) or by contacting the Department for Education, Sport and Culture on 445504.

**Nursery Education Fund**

Start date: **23/03/2016**

Status: **Review started**

**What is the review about?**

The Panel will review the proposed changes to the Nursery Education Fund (NEF) which provides free nursery places for 3–4 year olds.

**Terms of reference**

1. To establish how the proposals benefit or disadvantage the children of Jersey.
2. To establish:
  - i. what the Minister is hoping to achieve by the changes;
  - ii. why the Minister has chosen the parameters within the proposal  
and
  - iii. what preparation and consultation the Minister has undertaken to establish the impact of the proposals.
3. To hold public hearings with the Minister for Education and any other individuals or organisational representatives that the Panel considers necessary.
4. To gather evidence relating to the impact on stakeholders, including but not confined to parents, private nurseries and the provision of States nurseries and other services.
5. To present a report containing any recommendations to the States Assembly.