

2.3 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture regarding the use by families of holiday clubs in 2010:

Will the Minister state how many families made use of holiday clubs in 2010 and how many are likely to be adversely affected by his decision to cut this service?

Deputy J.G. Reed of St. Ouen (The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture):

In 2009, 446 families made use of the activity clubs provided by my department. This number reduced to 380 in 2010 and this year the number was 260. I do not believe that families will be adversely affected by the proposed changes, as even without the continuation of these activity clubs there are a wide range of clubs provided by private and charitable organisation at affordable prices. These are well placed to deliver high quality and flexible childcare, which I am sure will meet the needs of all parents. Thank you.

2.3.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Would the Minister inform Members how much notice he gave parents of this decision, what consultation took place with parents over this decision and what evidence he has that replacement for these missing places will be adequate?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

As the Deputy would expect, the department undertook quite a wide and broad-ranging consultation with first of all the providers to ensure that there are sufficient places available with Jersey Childcare Trust, who support the delivery of childcare provision. More importantly discussions took place with the parents. In fact, early in July all parents were invited to attend a meeting. Unfortunately, only 15 did.

2.3.2 Deputy D.J.A. Wimberley of St. Mary:

I nearly thought that the original questioner had asked my question, but the answer was a little bit thin. So, I want to go back to consultation. The Minister said that consultation had happened with the parents and that there was a meeting and 15 turned up. Could he, please, detail for us what that consultation consisted of?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

First of all letters were sent to parents explaining the proposed changes and to assure them that they could still access and would be able to access childcare through other providers. Then a further letter was sent out to invite them to a meeting for any that had particular concerns. That meeting was held, as I say, and 15 families turned up. Following that, we have had, I believe, discussions with a relatively small number of parents who still had concerns, but I believe those have now been addressed. Thank you.

2.3.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

Just a point of clarification; the Minister said that this year there were only 260 who had used the clubs. Of course, we are only in the beginning of November now. Will the Minister explain whether the clubs just provide summer holiday cover or if it is the whole year? If so, will he explain what that figure would be *pro rata* for this year?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

The clubs are basically provided at 2 particular times of the year; one during the Easter holidays and the other during the summer holidays. I am, therefore, relatively

confident that the 260 figure is the actual figure of the families that would be affected by the proposed changes.

2.3.4 Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier:

Would the Minister not agree that in fact since 2008 that the Department of Education has ... the numbers offered and the location offered to the parents have gone, that is why it has gone down. We are now down to 260 families who are the most in need, who will travel anywhere for the cheaper, good childcare that Education does offer. That is also a lot of children, I would suggest. It is families we are talking about. Even if they have one to 3 children, it is a lot of children affected.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

We are mindful of the fact that it is important that the right provision is provided in the right place and discussions have taken place with the private providers and charitable organisations. In fact it would be working closely and continue to work closely with them and have even offered our facilities to be used during the holiday period if that is deemed to support those parents who seek to access this type of club.

2.3.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Will the Minister agree to circulate, since he is so confident about his figures, the number of places available on what types of care or activity and the cost and placement of those centres, so that we can rest assured that there is in fact sufficient provision not to miss this particular facility?

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Certainly, I am quite happy to sit down with the Deputy and look at this matter and provide the information where I can that he is seeking.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

If I may, Sir, and to circulate that information.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

Following discussions with the Deputy, I will be fully aware of what information exactly he wishes me to circulate and then I will be able to do so.

2.3.6 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

I would like to ask the Minister if the public are going to have any confidence in the current consultation that is out on education when the 'Minister for Children' is asking the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture about the impacts of this move. The Minister has answered this morning that he has been in dialogue with the private organisations and he has been in dialogue with the charities, but it is obvious that he has not been in dialogue with the 'Minister for Children.' How are the public meant to derive confidence from this type of consultation?

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sir, may I raise a point of order?

The Bailiff:

No, not at the moment.

Deputy M. Tadier:

It is a point of order, sir.

The Bailiff:

A point of order. Alright.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you. Deputy Le Claire, I think, referred to the 'Minister for Children.' In my knowledge we do not have such a thing as a Minister for Children. So, could the Chair make a ruling or could the Deputy give an explanation of what he means?

Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:

It is my understanding - I am surprised the Deputy has to ask for clarification - that Deputy Martin has been serving as the 'Minister for Children' since the corporate parent has decided to make somebody responsible for that section. As the Deputy Assistant Minister for Health, she has been leading the way for children's issues for a number of years.

The Bailiff:

You were referring to Deputy Martin, as I understand it. The Deputy is right, there is no 'Minister for Children' as such, but there is an Assistant Minister who clearly has responsibility for areas which include that.

The Deputy of St. Ouen:

First of all, I would like to make States Members aware that this particular proposal is nothing new. This was brought forward with a range of proposals back in June and July. Discussions took place at the Council of Ministers with all Ministers regarding this proposal and many others. The Minister for Health and Social Services was fully aware that this matter was being dealt with. Equally, the department is tasked, and I am tasked as Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, with ensuring that the right provision is made for parents and children that I am tasked to oversee. I take that responsibility very seriously. It is unfortunate that the Assistant Minister has not chosen to discuss this matter or raise her concerns with me. But I can assure all States Members that this has been appropriately addressed, children of low income parents and those with special needs will continue to be supported as now and the right provision and the right quality of care will continue to be provided both now and in the future.