

2018.04.09

**3 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Minister for Education regarding the Jersey Early Learning Literacy Years (J.E.L.L.Y.) club programme for under-3s: [OQ.61/2018]**

Given the Government's commitment under the 1,001 Days Programme to early intervention and care for children, will the Minister advise whether the J.E.L.L.Y (Jersey Early Learning Literacy Years) club programme for under-3s was stopped at Easter, with 4 weeks' notice; and, if so, will he tell us why?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans of St. Helier (The Minister for Education):**

The J.E.L.L.Y. programme ... just to explain what J.E.L.L.Y. means, Jersey Early Learning Literacy Years, which is a programme that was started by the Bridge some years ago, has not been stopped. This early literacy programme is aimed at children below the statutory school age and is, therefore, entirely voluntary. The number of families taking up places has decreased over the last few years so that the number of clubs has reduced from 14 to 4. The Education Department has other flourishing strategies aimed at helping parents to get involved in early literacy with their children. For example, the Making it R.E.A.L. (Raising Early Achievement in Literacy) programme is an award-winning initiative developed by the National Children's Bureau to offer parents and their children a variety of opportunities to get involved in fun activities designed to support their children's early literacy development and to help create a strong home learning environment. In addition, the Early Years and Childhood Partnership is working with the department to expand the R.E.A.L., which means Raising Early Achievement in Literacy Programme, across our schools and has trained a number of practitioners across the early years' workforce including health visitors.

**3.3.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

If the Minister is correct in his statement that the programme has not been stopped why then have several parents contacted me saying to the contrary the J.E.L.L.Y. clubs have been stopped and I received a phone call saying that they would stop at Easter?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

I simply cannot answer that question. I have no idea why a parent would contact the Deputy with regard to this. As I have said already ... I do apologise, as most people are aware, there was a certain transition to power back on Friday afternoon so this has only come to me recently, but I was made aware at that point that there has been a reduction by parents, market forces, in some cases where parents have opted to look at these other programmes. So there has been no stopping on our part at all.

**3.3.2 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour:**

Can the Minister just outline whether the Making It R.E.A.L. programme; is that something that is just available for school age children or is that available from, I think, 3 to 4 months, from very young babies, the same as the J.E.L.L.Y. club?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

Yes, it is available from a very early age. It works with the Jersey Childcare Trust. They have been helping to establish it and run it through our schools. So it is available for very young children as well.

**3.3.3 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Supplementary please. How is this making it real? How is that communicated to all parents who might, perhaps, not already have a child in school to have that contact there with the school?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

I think you will find it is on the Government website.

**3.3.4 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:**

Is the Minister happy for any parent who has contacted Deputy Southern to contact the Minister directly to explain why they think that the scheme has been stopped?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

As always, my door is always open to any member of the public who has concerns with regard to the education of their children. So if anybody has any problems with that, yes, they can speak to me.

**3.3.5 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Obviously, the door is always open but can they phone the Deputy and expect an answer if they wish to explain why they think that the J.E.L.L.Y. club has been stopped and fill in the Minister on the information that he obviously seems to be lacking?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

Thank you to the Deputy. I think the best course of action is rather than phoning me is to email me so that there is an explicit record of the actions taken by both themselves and myself in response to them.

**3.3.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

The final supplementary might contain 2 questions. Will he, in the light of that last statement about clarity of the written form, state why the notice was given by phone and not by letter or email to parents and, further, would he explain whether the programmes he is referring as substitutes for J.E.L.L.Y. clubs were running alongside J.E.L.L.Y. clubs previously?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

I cannot answer the Deputy's first question because, again, this is the reason ... that is why I have suggested it has been dealt with my email, at least there is a track record of what happened. I do not know who phoned who at what particular time but I can certainly look into it and come back to the Assembly with ... sorry, could the Deputy repeat the second part of the question?

**Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Yes. Previously, while J.E.L.L.Y. clubs were in existence with 14, or whether it is 4, were they running in parallel with the programmes that he suggests are alternatives to the J.E.L.L.Y. clubs and has there been a reduction of services thereby?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

I think that is correct. I think we have been running this for some time and Members may or may not be aware from past discussions regarding the Bridge that I used to volunteer for the Bridge, so I know the people who work there intimately and I know the individual who started the J.E.L.L.Y. club. I think it is worth saying that, as an Education Department, we totally support what the J.E.L.L.Y. club does. I think it is a brilliant concept and I think it is a brilliant idea but I think parents have just looked around and found other things to do.

**Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:**

Could I ask for clarification please on an answer? The Minister referred to the Education.gov.je website for details of Making it R.E.A.L. I have just been searching that website. I have also Googled for it. I cannot find any details on it and the page where you get information about the J.E.L.L.Y. clubs and other parenting support services has absolutely no mention of it and there are 6 J.E.L.L.Y. clubs there. So the Minister seems to have incorrect information. Can he clarify that please?

**Deputy R.G. Bryans:**

Yes, and I have no intention to mislead the House. I was informed just this morning that that was the situation with regard to the website. I will certainly go back and have a look at that. If it is not up there and we are running these things then it should be. I could not talk about the discrepancy because once again the information I was given was that it was 4 and not 6 but I will look into the situation. I will repeat again, that we have always subscribed to the 1,001 Days notion of helping parents as much as we can in helping them educate their children and certainly we have been quite vocal in our support for things like the J.E.L.L.Y. club, like the R.E.A.L. programme, like Every Child Our Future so we will continue to do that.