

STATES OF JERSEY



INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE: A VISION FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE FOR CHILDREN IN JERSEY

**Presented to the States on 5th July 2005
by the Education, Sport and Culture Committee**

STATES GREFFE

CONSULTATION

Investing in Our Future sets out for consultation, the Education, Sport and Culture Committee's vision for early childhood education and care in Jersey. It contains plans to develop and extend high quality early learning opportunities for young children by investing in private sector provision to complement nursery classes in provided primary schools.

The Committee is interested to hear the views of States Members, community groups, private sector providers and members of the public about these proposals. Responses should be sent to:

Investing In Our Future Consultation
The Department for Education, Sport and Culture
P.O. Box 142
Highlands
St. Saviour
JE4 8QJ

Email responses may be sent to ecec@gov.je

The closure date for consultation will be 30th September 2005. All the responses received will help in the formation of more detailed options for the future which will be published later this year.

FOREWORD

Every child in Jersey should have the opportunity to grow up in an Island that values children and families. The realisation of this is dependent upon government which recognises that the education and care of children is a shared responsibility between family and the community. A quality early childhood education and care experience can supplement good parenting and have positive long-term benefits on children's lives. This in turn leads to significant benefits for society.

Objective 3.7.1 of the States Strategic Plan 2005 – 2010, documents a commitment to increase the number of three to five year olds accessing 'early years' programmes and assigns lead responsibility for this to the Education, Sport and Culture Committee. The proposals outlined in *Investing in Our Future* are designed to give effect to this and to remove some of the barriers which currently prevent children accessing high quality provision. The implementation of these proposals will make early education and care more affordable, accessible and equitable for all.

The focus of *Investing In Our Future* is primarily three and four year olds. However, for maximum effect, these proposals should be implemented in the context of broader and more coherent family policy which supports working parents in the choices they make, particularly in respect of children under the age of three. To this end, the Education, Sport and Culture Committee is committed to consult with its strategic partners, the Employment and Social Security and Economic Development Committees as well as the Health and Social Services and Policy and Resources Committees. Working together we can ensure that every child in Jersey has the opportunity to grow up in an Island that truly values its children and families.



Senator Mike Vibert
President of Education, Sport and Culture

INTRODUCTION

We know, from research, about the value of high quality early childhood education and care for the healthy growth and development of children. There is compelling evidence from studies conducted throughout the world to suggest that it contributes fundamentally to the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and linguistic development of children^[1].

This is particularly true for disadvantaged children from high risk, low income families, where quality provision has been shown to have strongly positive effects that can partially compensate for home circumstances^[2] and improve educational attainment even into adulthood.

The Education, Sport and Culture Committee recognises that, all too often, parents struggle to reconcile work and family life. High quality early childhood education and care facilitates female employment, boosts tax revenue and minimises expenditure on social benefits. It supports education and training whilst promoting the equality of women by enabling them to retain career and work continuity.

Good parenting is fundamental to child development and the Committee realises that its strategy will inevitably play a crucial role in helping families find an appropriate balance between work and family life. Nevertheless, child development and early education are at the heart of the Committee's vision for the future. A child's early years are the most influential. Children who are well-cared for in early life are more likely to be emotionally and socially well-adjusted and more successful at school. They enjoy better health, employment continuity and higher earnings.

This, in turn, has long term benefits for society. Better health means a reduction in health costs borne by the public. Higher skilled workers positively influence productivity, earn higher wages, pay more taxes and need less support. Socially well-balanced children grow up to be better citizens and parents. Good citizenship and parenting is the foundation of a socially balanced and cohesive society.

The Committee believes that investing in our youngest children is one of the best ways to positively influence the long term social and economic future of our Island. This paper outlines the Committee's vision for early childhood education and care.

THE VISION

Within three years:

- there would be more coherent family policy, based on clear values which recognise that the States needs to actively support parents in the choices they make in the best interests of child development;
- all three and four year olds would have access to affordable high quality early education and care for up to 30 hours per week for 38 weeks per year;
- an integrated children's centre would provide free early education and extended childcare for vulnerable children under 5 years old, family support, adult education and outreach services. It would also provide a base for the existing Parenting Team, the Jersey Child Care Trust and the Youth Action Team and operate as a one-stop-shop providing information on all aspects of early years provision.

To support this vision:

- a new partnership would be established between the public and private sector to include private providers who commit to quality and a fair value contract;
- a clear set of principles would be developed to underpin all funded provision and address key child

development issues relevant to Jersey;

- the current evaluation framework would be expanded to complement existing good practice in registration and ensure the highest standards of provision;
- funding would be channelled to accredited private sector partners to support high quality provision for rising four year olds;
- the Jersey Child Care Trust would become a more powerful champion for quality and focus on raising income to support childcare, encouraging the development of family friendly policies in the workplace and providing information to the States, parents and partners.

DEVELOPING THE VISION

Recognising the complexity, significance and cost of early childhood education and care, the Education, Sport and Culture Committee commissioned a comprehensive review of its investment in this area in February 2004. The review was conducted by Jenny Spratt, Head of Early Years and Childcare in Peterborough, a Local Authority recognised for excellence in early childhood provision. The terms of reference were as follows:

'To undertake a mid-term review of the Jersey Child Care Trust Five Year Strategy and the funding, responsibilities and purposes of the Trust in relation to the overall strategy for early years and childcare in Jersey and to make recommendations to the Education, Sport and Culture Committee with regards to:

The need for an overall strategy based on integrated working to support children and families;

Creating clarity and focus regarding the roles and responsibilities of different departments and organisations in developing the strategy and achieving its aims'.

The ensuing report, *A Vision for the Future of Early Education and Childcare in Jersey*, was received by the Committee in July, published to the States as R.C. 35/2004 in August and presented to members of the public at a Town Hall meeting in September. In summary, the report concluded that:

Whilst there is a clear strategy for Early Years Education in Jersey, there is no overall States strategy for integrated early education and childcare.

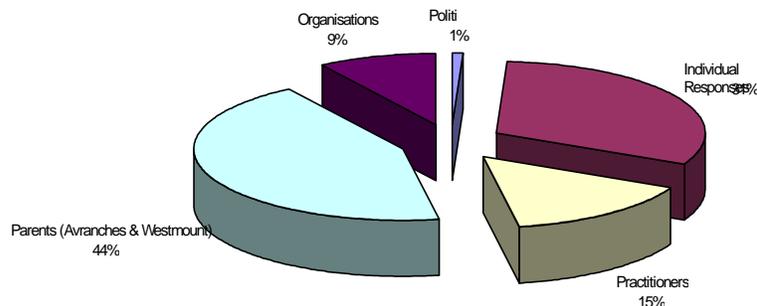
The JCCT at the mid-term of its Five Year Strategy has become too broad and is no longer focused on its original objectives.

The JCCT is perceived as being effective in some areas of its work but lack of transparency and consultation has resulted in the duplication of roles and responsibilities.

A perceived lack of investment in early education and childcare services has resulted in criticism of current policy.

During the consultation period that followed, 121 responses were received from individuals, groups and organisations.

Figure 1: Responses to 'A Vision for the Future of Early Education and Childcare in Jersey'



Groups and organisations who contributed included:

- Centre Point Trust
- Jersey Child Care Trust
- Jersey Early Years Association
- The Partnership Group for Early Years Education and Childcare
- The AMOS Christian Trust
- The Group for the Eradication of Poverty
- The Primary Head Teachers Association
- Parents Action Group from the Parish Nurseries
- Parents from St. Martin, First Tower and Plat Douet primary schools

The Committee is grateful to the many individuals and groups whose contributions to this debate have been of great value and much appreciated.

This vision has been influenced by their contributions as well as research from other countries into the nature and benefits of early childhood programmes for children at different phases of their development and key demographic, social and economic trends in Jersey.

THE STRUCTURE OF EARLY YEARS PROVISION IN JERSEY

Background

Prior to 1996, childcare in Jersey was mostly a private concern. The *Report of the Working Party on Childcare (1996)* recognised the benefits of high quality childcare for children in the early years of development and presented the original childcare strategy to the States 'to extend the current range of child care provision for children up to 12 years through partnerships between all interested parties whilst ensuring high standards in all provision'.

The working party also made recommendations which led to the formation of the Jersey Child Care Trust, the enhancement of tax allowances for childcare costs and the introduction of child care allowances for low income groups. The Trust was established to co-ordinate, promote and facilitate the expansion of child care provision.

Policy in relation to early childhood provision has been overseen by a number of Committees. These include Education, Sport and Culture, Employment and Social Security and Health and Social Services.

Childcare

The Education, Sport and Culture Committee is the political sponsor and primary source of funding for the Jersey Child Care Trust. It is also responsible for the registration of childcare providers.

The classification of providers, for the purposes of registration under the Children's (Jersey) Law 1969, Part VII, is as follows:

Day Nurseries provide full day care for children of a wide age range which may include babies. They tend to offer an all year service on weekdays, closing on Bank Holidays and for short periods at Christmas and Easter. Hours of opening usually accommodate the needs of working parents.

Playgroups provide specifically for children between the ages of two and five years and offer care sessions for periods up to five hours. Such groups may refer to themselves as *nurseries*, *nursery schools*, *kindergartens* or *pre-schools*. Some playgroups are open all year round whilst others follow school terms.

Playcare is provided primarily for children from the age of school entry up to twelve years and is designed to meet the needs of working parents before and after the school day and during school holiday periods. *Playcare* may be offered in a variety of settings such as school premises, children's centres, community centres or church halls.

Play Schemes provided by the Committee deliver a form of *playcare* during the Easter and summer school holidays for children aged between 5 and 11 years. They are usually based on school premises.

Family Day Care offers care to children in the family day carer's own home. Family Day Carers may, at any one time, cater for a maximum of 6 children under the age of 14 of which no more than three may be under the age of five years.

Early Education

It has been the Committee's policy to provide, in the long term, a nursery class place for every three and four year old whose parents want one. This has been driven primarily by child development concerns rather than the provision of child care places to facilitate mothers taking up or returning to employment. Provision is up to 30 hours per week, term time only. No fees are currently charged for children attending nursery classes although a facility exists in the Education (Jersey) Law 1999 for the States to introduce fees if deemed appropriate.

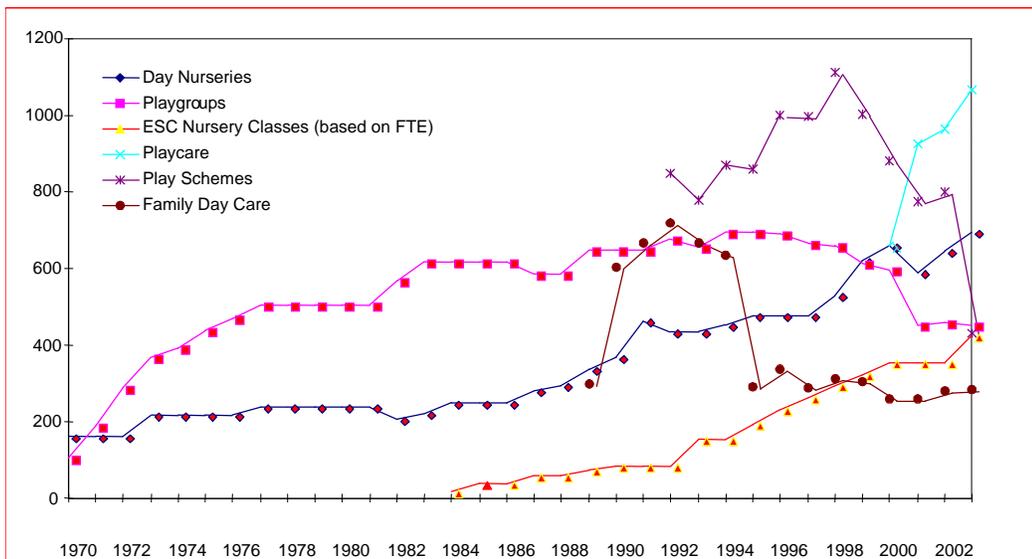
Special Needs

The Committee also provides additional support for children with special needs. There are resourced nursery provisions at provided primary schools which cater for children with hearing impairment, physical disability, language disorders and attention and communication difficulties.

THE DISTRIBUTION AND AVAILABILITY OF PLACES^[3]

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of nursery class and registered childcare places in Jersey between 1970 and 2002.

Figure 2: The Distribution and Availability of Early Years Places 1970 - 2002



Certain significant trends may be drawn from this data. There has been a continued growth in the number of nursery class places in provided primary schools, giving effect to the former Education Committee's policy [4] agreed in October 1989.

Following a period of growth up to the mid 1990's there has been a decline in the number of playgroups. The demand for family day care places has remained fairly stable, possibly because family day care is a parental preference which is largely unaffected by the development of other kinds of childcare provision.

Whilst the number of playcare places has increased following the introduction of registration for playcare providers, the demand for places available in play schemes has declined significantly.

Although it is difficult to isolate one factor, apart from demographic growth, that has affected trends in relation to childcare provision, it is reasonable to assume that the Committee's policy in respect of nursery classes in provided schools has had an impact on the nature and distribution of other provision. However, it is important to emphasise that the increase in the number of places available in the Committee's nursery classes since 1984, has been matched by a similar increase in the number of places available in Day Nurseries, the majority of which are privately provided. This growth in the private sector is unsurprising since strong economies are often associated with labour shortages which attract mothers into the work place and provide a natural stimulus for the expansion of private childcare provision [5].

The growth in nursery class places has meant that 49% of three and four year olds now access free high quality provision for up to 30 hours per week, 38 weeks per year.

THE CASE FOR CHANGE

The main issues in relation to early childhood education and care in Jersey are about affordability, equity and access.

Affordability

The cost of childcare in Jersey presents a challenge for many parents. This is especially the case for single parent families; where there is a child with special needs or for families where there is more than one child under school age. Parents responding to the consultation on 'A Vision for the Future of Early Education and Childcare in Jersey' made the following comments:

"At the moment my nursery fees are £1,490 per month, from September this will increase to

£1,566. I earn £1,900 per month We want to give them the best we can but I don't know how long we can go on paying these amounts each month. There will be only one option open to us, to go back to England after seventeen years. I feel this is so unfair."

"My nursery tries to keep fees affordable they are non-profit making. Not easy to meet fees of £536 per month. I need all year nursery."

"Far too expensive, nearly half my salary is devoted to providing a full-time nursery place when I have two other children to support as well as general living expenses."

The average cost of a private sector nursery place for a child under two years in Jersey is 63% higher than the average cost across England and 30% higher than the cost of a similar nursery place in London. For children over two years of age these figures are 52% and 26% respectively. Although, in making these comparisons, no adjustments have been made to Jersey figures to take account of variations in average earnings, costs of goods, services and property rents, the minimum staff to child ratios are the same as in England. However, salaries paid to childcare workers in England are generally poor compared to Jersey.

Figure 3: Average Weekly Cost Per Child of Nursery Places^[6]

Area	Under 2 Years	2 Years +
Jersey Average	218	187
Inner London	168	149
Outer London	169	147
England Average	134	123

Whilst parents have access to financial support, specifically through the Child Tax Credit and the Childcare Allowance, the Committee recognises that childcare needs to be more affordable. Conversely, the Committee does not believe that the injection of public funding into the private sector, either in the form of subsidies to parents or providers, would guarantee affordability, unless other mechanisms were place to ensure fair value.

Equity

A two-tier system currently exists. Nursery classes provide half of the total capacity for 3 and 4 year olds and the parents of these children enjoy free access while the rest must pay for places in the private sector. Whilst some parents will always choose private provision and expect to pay the market rate, others find that their choices are constrained by their capacity to pay.

"Finance plays a huge role in my decision making process on whether to move my child from [nursery] to a free States run nursery. I feel very strongly that I do not have freedom of choice on this issue ..."

The equity issue is further exacerbated by the fact that nursery classes are staffed by qualified teachers who receive better pay and conditions of service than their counterparts in the childcare sector where higher and more costly staff to child ratios are required.

Access

Day nurseries provide childcare for up to 50 hours per week for 48 weeks per year. This private provision better suits the needs of many working parents. Nursery classes, on the other hand, provide for a maximum of 30 hours per week during term time, leaving some parents, who work longer hours, to find complementary forms of provision. A further complication arises when parents who predominantly want an educational experience for their children are unable to access a free place whilst others, whose prime concern is childcare, may secure one. Also, as most nursery class provision is currently offered on a full time basis, some parents who only want a part-time educational experience for their child may be unable to access one.

“The current plan by ESC to provide a nursery class in every primary school is admirable but does not meet the requirements of many parents. For those who are working full-time, the school day is at least 2 hours shorter ...”

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development’s definition of early childhood education and care includes:

‘... all arrangements providing care and education of children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours, or programme content ... to include policies – including parental leave arrangements – and provision concerning children under age 3, a group often neglected in discussions in the educational sphere’.^[7]

The Committee sees its responsibilities for under threes predominantly in terms of protection through the administration of the childcare registration process for which it is legally responsible. However, it recognises that there is a need for more coherent family policy, based on clear values which recognise that the States needs to actively support parents in the choices they make in the best interests of child development.

Research suggests that maternal and parental leave during the first year of a child’s life, is associated with better maternal and child health^[8] which in turn impacts positively on child development. On the other hand there is also strong evidence that high quality childcare alongside parental care at home is similarly beneficial, although the case in favour of childcare for children under 18 months is less compelling^[9]. Whilst the Committee has chosen to focus its attention on provision for three and four year olds, it recognises the need to consult with other States Committees on wider family policy issues.

THE CASE FOR INVESTMENT IN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION AND CARE

Although child development is at the heart of the Committee’s vision for early years, other factors such as work life balance, income and family context also influence normal child development. Therefore the case for investment is based on an analysis of needs in Jersey and the potential long term benefits to society of investing in early child development.

Economically Active Parents

Figure 4: Working Mothers with Children Aged 0-5 Years in Jersey^[10]

Hours Worked Per Week	Number of Working Mothers	Percent of Working Mothers
1-5	22	1
6-10	84	5
11-15	125	7
16-20	313	18
21-25	376	21
26-30	173	10
31-35	209	12
36-40	361	20
41-45	71	4
46-50	35	2
>50	16	1

Discussions about childcare are predominantly associated with patterns of female employment and the potential discriminatory impact of child-rearing for mothers in employment. Women often have to consider the consequences of having children on career continuity and progression and, where maternal earnings form an integral part of a family's income, some mothers may be faced with a difficult choice. This is an issue for Jersey: the proportion of women working in Jersey is higher than in the U.K. and is amongst the highest in Europe^[11]; the proportion of part-time employees who are female is particularly high at 90%; 39% of all working women with children under five years old are working in excess of 30 hours per week; 70% work in excess of 20 hours per week and about one in eight working mothers in Jersey, with children under five years old, are single parents.

Low Income Families

Even though early education and care is viewed by many as a good thing, some parents struggle to afford the cost. A widely applied measure of relative low income in Europe is the proportion of households whose equivalised^[12] income falls below 60 per cent of the median income in a particular country. Although this is not an absolute measure it does provide a way to compare jurisdictions. After the inclusion of housing costs, about a third of children aged less than 16 years, in both Jersey and the U.K.^[13], live in households below the respective relative income thresholds. In Jersey this corresponds to some 5,100 children. Single families are particularly susceptible to relative low income in Jersey; almost two-thirds of single parents with school age children fall below the threshold measure.

Figure 5: Comparison of proportion of population living below low relative income threshold in Jersey and the U.K. (% of each age group category).

Age group	Before Housing Costs		After Housing Costs	
	Jersey 2002	U.K. 2001/02	Jersey 2002	U.K. 2001/02
Children	22	21	33	30
Pensioners	31	22	33	22
Other adults	11	14	19	19
All persons	16	17	24	22

Inclusion

Quality early childhood education and care is often critical to help families who originate from outside Jersey to settle, integrate and become self-sufficient. It can provide all children with a cultural orientation. For children from non-English speaking families, it can stimulate language development and promote social inclusion.

At the time of the 2001 Census, almost half of Jersey's resident population had been born outside of the Island; 36% were born elsewhere in the British Isles or the Republic of Ireland whilst 6% were born in Portugal or Madeira. Portuguese was the second principal language spoken by 8.4% of the resident population. Of those residents who did not speak English as a first language, 71% spoke it as a second language whilst 1.6% of residents (corresponding to some 1,400 people) were unable to speak English.

Migration

The Actuarial Profession^[14] is considering the extent to which government policies influence population changes in the U.K., particularly in respect of birth rates in the context of an ageing society. It recognises that parents ultimately decide whether or not to have children, but accepts that many factors, health, social and economic,

influence this decision. Government policy is capable of influencing these factors.

Although, the impact of such intervention in Jersey may be far less significant, it is important to recognise that, with the benefits provided through its childcare strategy, England might prove to be a more attractive option for young families who would otherwise return or migrate to Jersey, where the cost of housing and the cost of living is already high.

The U.K. Government’s 10 year strategy promises to –

- extend paid maternity leave to one year by the end of the next Parliament;
- raise childcare tax credits for middle and low income families;
- extend free nursery places for all 3 and 4 year olds to 20 hours per week, 38 weeks per year;
- provide 2,500 children’s centres by 2008 and 3,500 by 2010.

Current Investment

It is debateable how far government should intervene to support non-statutory early childhood education and care. The Committee takes the view that, measured and focused intervention can provide considerable benefits for children themselves and, in the long term, for the Island as a whole. There is clear evidence that high quality early childhood education and care programmes actually work. However, high quality programmes tend to be expensive.

The European Union recommends that member states annually invest approximately 1% of GDP on early childhood education and care. In practice, there is considerable variation with, for example, the U.K. investing 0.4% and Sweden 1.7%. For jurisdictions such as Jersey, dominated by the financial services sector, GNI is the more appropriate measure of the size of the economy^[15]; 1% of Jersey’s GNI in 2003 corresponded to approximately £29m. Although no estimate of the State’s overall expenditure on early education and childcare according to the OECD definition is available, in 2003, Jersey compared less favourably with other European countries in respect of children aged 3 years having access to free education.

Figure 6: Investment in Early Childhood Education and Care^[16]

Measure	Jersey Performance	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile
Children aged 3 with access to free education %	33%	51%	60%	66%

In 2005, most four and all five year olds now have access to a free place in reception classes at provided primary schools and 49% of three and four year olds to a free nursery place for up to 30 hours per week, 38 weeks per year. By providing all three and four year olds with access to an affordable, high quality early years experience, the Committee believes that the States would be making a sound investment in the future of the Island.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTEGRATED CHILDRENS’ CENTRE

The case for interventions which improve the life chances of disadvantaged children from high risk, low income families is compelling, even from the first year. High quality provision has been shown to have strongly positive effects that can partially compensate for home circumstances and significantly improve the educational attainment of disadvantaged children even into adulthood^[17]. The delivery of integrated services, health, education, childcare, and welfare can improve life chances dramatically.

The Bull Report (2000) identified levels of emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) amongst young people of school age in Jersey which exceed national norms. Unlike the U.K., where general learning difficulties feature

as the most common type of special educational need, in Jersey SEBD (severe emotional and behavioural difficulty) is perceived to be the most prevalent.

'For the island ... EBD is not only perceived as the most significant SEN, it is also represented at a level which supersedes national norms.

'... when combining visible types of SEN across the age groups, SEBD is the most prevalent in primary and secondary years with SEBD representing closer to half of the total SEN visible population than any other special need.'

The States currently commits significant funding to support children and young people who present with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties, in an attempt to remediate problems which often have their roots in the early years.

The Committee's vision for the development of an integrated children's centre acknowledges that the most significant factors which affect child development are the home and parental behaviour. Often, disadvantaged parents themselves face challenges which affect their parenting behaviour. The benefits of constructive and supportive intervention to promote positive parenting are already evident through the work of the Parenting Team originally established with funding from the Substance Misuse Strategy. This team works intensively with disadvantaged and teenage parents and has become an integral part of the Youth Action Team established through the Children's Executive to work with young offenders, young people presenting SEBD and families at risk.

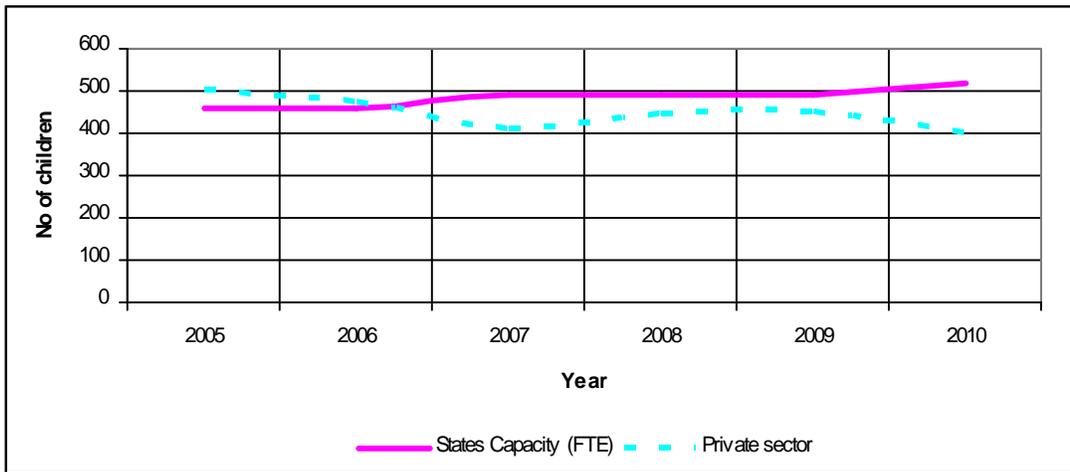
The Committee sees these services being offered together with pre-school language support, special needs provision, adult education and other outreach services in an integrated children's centre. The centre would also become the base for a restructured Jersey Child Care Trust and operate as a one-stop-shop providing information and support to parents on everything that affects child development. It could also become a base for childminder networks.

PARTNERSHIP

In pursuing its vision for early years, one challenge which the Committee faces is how to work effectively in partnership with the private sector without compromising the educational philosophy and intentions which underpin the development of nursery classes.

Free or more affordable provision could be made available by continuing to invest solely in public sector provision, i.e. nursery classes at provided primary schools. This would guarantee uniformity in terms of cost and quality but would take a long time to achieve and, in all probability, have an adverse effect on private sector provision. On the other hand, more affordable provision could be achieved without the expense of further capital development by cementing a truly cohesive partnership with the private sector and using subsidies, grants or vouchers to channel funds.

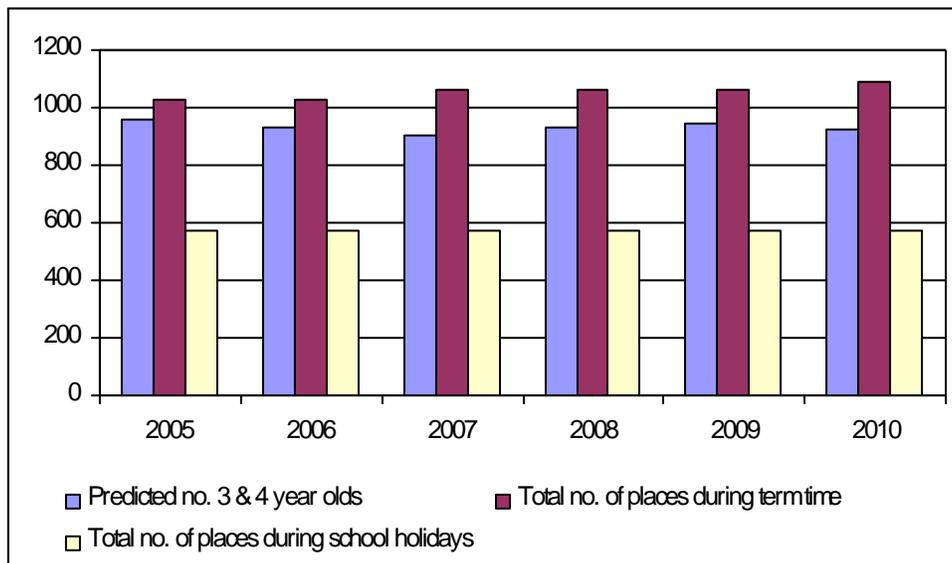
Figure 7: Hypothetical Impact of Free Nursery Class Provision on the Private Sector 2005 – 2010



Using mean population predictions it is possible to predict the number of children who arrive in provided primary schools to within 3 percent. Using the same model and assuming that all nursery class places are taken up on a full-time basis, figure 7 illustrates simplistically, the potential impact of nursery class expansion on the private sector. This position would be exacerbated if significant part-time provision was reintroduced in the public sector.

The Committee acknowledges the contribution that the private sector has made to early childhood education and care in Jersey over the past thirty years and does not wish its policy to have an adverse affect on private providers who offer a high quality, fair value, all year service. In effect, this range of provision is necessary to support parents who work full-time. Inevitably, its demise could reduce the availability of needed childcare places for babies. Rather, the Committee recognises that a partnership with the private sector could extend the capacity of the system to provide a high quality place for every three and four year old by 2009 (figure 8).

Figure 8: Projected Combined Capacity of Public Private Sector Provision 2005 – 2010



To work effectively this partnership would need, from the outset, to involve key stakeholders who would then define clear goals for the future, develop a framework for quality and accountability and establish clear ground rules. Although some reorganisation might be necessary to ensure that provision across the system better meets the needs of working parents, the Committee is confident that a collaborative partnership would provide better support for children and parents.

The Jersey Childcare Trust would have a significant role to play in this partnership. It would continue 'to

coordinate, promote and facilitate the expansion of high quality and affordable childcare provision in the Island^[18] providing information to parents and professionals, supporting training and passporting small grants to providers. It would become a more powerful champion for quality and take a lead role engaging parents in that process. Furthermore, it would seek to attract private sector funding and encourage employers to develop more family friendly workplaces which recognise the value, to the family and the employer, of flexible working practices.

A FOCUS ON EARLY LEARNING

“The accumulated findings of child psychology and brain research suggest that sensitive learning periods occur at specific ages and that adult interventions in their lives are more telling in these periods than in others.”^[19]

The Committee believes that an opportunity now exists for us to review our image of the experiences we want young children to enjoy in their early years and to develop provisions that will deliver the highest quality to all.

In recent years, early childhood education and care has been the focus of much attention for researchers and governments throughout the world. Some countries, such as Sweden and Denmark, define clearly what publicly funded provision will deliver for young children. Other countries are less prescriptive, enabling parents to choose what suits them best and allowing market forces to shape the philosophy and structure of resultant provision. The Committee believes that, if public funding is used to support an early childhood education and care strategy, it is reasonable for the States to take a view about the nature of provision and to maintain high expectations in respect of quality.

The debate as to whether early childhood provision should primarily be about childcare or education is often misunderstood. Nursery classes are perceived to offer an educational experience whilst Day Nurseries and Pre-Schools provide childcare. At one extreme these perceptions conjure up images of ‘schoolification’^[20] whilst at the other, of children who are merely supervised and not stimulated intellectually. In reality, either scenario is rare. Rather there is a growing realisation among professionals working with young children that, child development and childcare objectives are not mutually exclusive – good education involves good care and good care involves good educational experiences.

From the Committee’s perspective, the distinction between nursery classes and childcare provisions is important. The policy of developing nursery classes has been driven primarily by child development concerns rather than the provision of childcare places to facilitate mothers taking up or returning to employment. This means that the emphasis is on providing good educational experiences underpinned by good childcare practices. Even so, the Committee does recognise that nursery classes, whilst providing a specific experience for children inevitably provide childcare, although often not in a form that fully covers the needs of working parents.

Nevertheless, by appointing qualified teachers and investing in stimulating, purpose-built environments, the Committee has sought to ensure the highest quality experiences for young children; to provide a flexible structure which guides and supports both the work and professional development of staff; to provide a common language which facilitates dialogue between staff and parents about child development issues and, from the child’s perspective, to ease transition from nursery into school. This approach embraces the concept of ‘education in its broadest sense’. It is about the holistic development of the child socially, emotionally and intellectually.

The pre-schools of Reggio Emilia in Northern Italy are the embodiment of this approach. These nursery schools are hailed as exemplary and the *Reggio Approach*, developed by Loris Malaguzzi, has influenced developments in early learning throughout the world. It is based very strongly on a particular image of the child as a curious, imaginative and independent learner and emphasises the role of the expressive arts as a vehicle for early learning and creative discovery.

The High/Scope Project in America offers a similar pre-school programme which is structured to provide young children with choice and to foster their independence and autonomy. The Foundation Stage Curriculum which is

currently implemented in the U.K. and Jersey is another approach designed to support children's learning through planned and spontaneous play. Again, the emphasis is on learning and the holistic development of the child.

Whilst the Committee's vision has been influenced by such acclaimed curriculum developments in early childhood education and care, it is recognised that public and private sector partners will need to develop a shared philosophy and agree a curriculum that best meets the needs of children in Jersey.

FUNDING THE COMMITTEE'S VISION

The issue of how best to fund early childhood education and care in the future poses a dilemma. At present, the Committee provides 460 free nursery class places. The rationale for this provision is based on the significant benefits that accrue to children. Based on the 2005 cohort, the estimated additional revenue cost of delivering free early education and childcare 30 hours per week, 38 weeks per year for all remaining three and four year olds would be approximately £2m per annum at 2005 values. This is based on subsidising places at the current average private sector childcare cost per hour and takes account of the costs associated with the administration, development and implementation of a quality assurance framework.

However, whilst the Committee supports the concept of free provision, it would be unable to meet this additional commitment from within its existing revenue budget and would require additional funding from the States.

An alternative would be to provide a reduced free entitlement of 20 hours per week for all and to introduce flat rate charges for additional hours provided in nursery classes. Whilst estimating the savings associated with this model is subject to significant uncertainties, it is anticipated that the additional overall costs would be reduced if the revenue gained from raising charges for nursery classes was used to offset expenditure on private sector places. Whilst it is difficult to accurately assess the true impact of this, it would certainly make provision more affordable and deliver an optimum minimum entitlement^[21] similar to that which the U.K. Government aspires to.

A third solution would be to introduce graduated fees and means testing for all provision, including nursery classes. This would offer a pragmatic and cost effective way to address the inequality of the current two-tier system but it might also prove complex and costly to administer. Again derived revenue might be used to subsidise provision thereby reducing the overall cost to parents and the States. Inevitably, it would mean the withdrawal of free provision for the nursery class cohort which could be regarded as backward step. In any case, the real argument against means testing is that it could make early years provision less attractive to some parents and lead to the use of unregistered childcare.

In Denmark, Sweden and Finland early childhood education and care is heavily subsidised. In the U.K., policy has been geared toward providing some free entitlement. In Reggio Emilia, early years provision is means tested and all parents are expected to contribute something. The Committee, whilst favouring a free entitlement for all, is conscious that this may be difficult to achieve in the current financial context and would welcome the views of other States Members and the community on this issue.

In most jurisdictions where public funding is used to support early childhood education and care, it is generally through one or a mix of two methods. One way is for subsidies to be directed to families so as to provide choice. This can be done through tax credits and child care allowances but this mechanism does not necessarily guarantee affordability or uniformity in terms of quality. Another method is to channel subsidies directly to private sector providers by way of grants or vouchers but again this would not guarantee quality or affordability unless a clear accountability framework was introduced.

The Committee takes the view that the second method is preferable but only where private providers are prepared to enter into a fair value partnership which guarantees a quality experience and realistic charges.

SUMMARY

The Committee's policy to develop nursery classes in provided primary schools is driven by child development

concerns rather than the provision of childcare for working parents. Since 1984, the growth in public sector education provision has been matched by a comparable growth in private sector childcare provision. This has led to a two tier system whereby approximately half of all three year olds have access to a free place.

Although the Committee currently has plans to develop further nursery classes at St. Clements's School (2006) and St. Peter's School (2009) it recognises that it would be many years before this approach would provide a place for every 3 and 4 year old.

Therefore in the best interests of child development the Committee is proposing a collaborative partnership with private sector providers who are willing to commit to a high quality and fair value contract. However, recognising the current the financial context of the Island, the Committee is aware that this may not be easily achievable without additional funding from the States.

[1] Andersson, B.E. (1992); Doherty (1996); National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (1997); Effective Provision of Pre-School Education Project (1997-2003).

[2] Carolina Abecedarian Project (1972, 1987, 1998).

[3] Mountford S, 2002.

[4] Pre-school Education: Future Strategy 1989.

[5] OECD (2004).

[6] *source England figures: Daycare Trust 2004; Jersey figures: Jersey Child Care Trust 2004.*

[7] OECD (2003).

[8] Parental Leave and Child Health Across OECD Countries (Tanaka, S. 2004)

[9] The Effects of Early Maternal Employment on Child Development in the U.K. (Gregg, Washbrook, 2003).

[10] States of Jersey Statistics Unit, 2004.

[11] Report on the 2001 Jersey Census (Chapter 6), States of Jersey Statistics Unit, October 2002.

[12] Equivilisation is a simple mathematical adjustment which enables households of different sizes and types to compared on a consistent basis.

[13] Reports on the Jersey Income Distribution Survey 2002; States of Jersey Statistics Unit, Sept. 2003 & July 2004

[14] More Babies? Who needs them? – The Actuarial Profession 2004.

[15] Jersey Gross Value Added (GVA) and Gross National Income (GNI) 1998-2003; States of Jersey Statistics Unit, Sept. 2004.

[16] KPMG (2003).

[17] Carolina Abecedarian Project (1972, 1987, 1998).

[18] Jersey Childcare Trust Constitution.

[19] PEI, 2000 quoted in Bennett (2004).

[20] Bennett J. (2004).

[21] Effective Provision of Pre-school Education 2003.