

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE EDUCATION, SPORT
AND CULTURE COMMITTEE ON 5th JULY 2005**

The Education, Sport and Culture Committee has today published its vision for early childhood education and care in Jersey.

'Investing in Our Future' sets out for consultation, proposals to develop and extend high quality early learning opportunities for young children in Jersey.

High quality early childhood programmes make a difference. The benefits, educationally and socially are indisputable. If we want a balanced society that is compassionate, caring and prosperous, it makes sense to invest in our children.

States' members will recall that, last year, the Committee commissioned a review of its investment in this area. This was conducted by an independent consultant, Jenny Spratt, Head of Early Years in Peterborough, a local authority recognised for excellence in this field. Her report concluded that the States needed to develop an overall strategy based on integrated working to support children and families.

'Investing in Our Future' represents the Education, Sport and Culture Committee's contribution to that overall strategy. Its proposals were developed following extensive consultation with parents, community groups and private sector providers. Although the report focuses mainly on provision for three and four year olds, it also draws attention to the fact that Jersey needs to develop a more coherent framework of family policy. The Committee is committed to work with its strategic partners, the Employment and Social Security and Economic Development Committees to that end.

We now have an opportunity to develop, to change and to build strong partnerships with parents, providers and between States' Committees that will ultimately give our children the best possible start.

This year, probably more than in any in the last twenty years, States members have been challenged to consider our economic position. The debate has been comprehensive and vibrant.

The early years debate warrants similar attention. It is also about investment and the future of our Island. My prime purpose in making this statement today is to draw the attention of States' members to the Committee's proposals so that you may be actively involved in what is a truly important issue for our community.