



Care of Children in Jersey Review Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Children and Housing

Monday, 3rd June 2019

Panel:

Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier (Chairman)

Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour (Vice-Chairman)

Deputy T. Pointon of St. John

Witnesses:

Senator S.Y. Mézec, The Minister for Children and Housing

Andrew Heaven, Director Children's Policy

Susan Devlin, Group Director Children's Services

Mark Rogers, Director General, Children, Young People Education and Skills

[14:16]

Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier (Chairman):

Welcome to the quarterly hearing with The Minister for Children and Housing, which really means it will be the children that we are focusing on. Just draw your attention to the information that is on the desk there about scrutiny hearings and that there are no recordings allowed in the room, but they are being streamed and you can download the stream as well, so it is very available. Just some quick introductions; so I am Deputy Robert Ward, Chairman of the review panel.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour (Vice-Chairman):

Deputy Kevin Pamplin, vice-chair of the panel.

Deputy T. Pointon of St. John:

I am Deputy St. John Trevor Pointon, I am a member of the panel.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Senator Sam Mézec, Minister for Children.

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Mark Rogers, Director General for Children, Young People, Education and Skills.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay. We have just recently had the follow-up visit from the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry, there are lots of long titles in these we found. What feedback, if any, has the Minister received from the panel about a recent visit, review of progress that is made, implementation and the recommendations?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Subsequent to the piece of work that they have just concluded, I have not had any direct feedback as a result of that. We are obviously anticipating that we will have their report ready to publish in time for the 2-year anniversary of the first report, which then I would present to the States Assembly. We have obviously had people attend the public hearings and, from our side, have been cooperating with the panel as much as we can. Their way of working and work programme was obviously independent to us, they decided how and what they were going to do, and we just cooperated with whatever they said. I have not yet had the opportunity to have a debrief to speak among my officers to say just how we thought it went at this point. It is obviously a useful exercise when they are coming back and providing that sort of scrutiny. It makes you take a second look at things, which has been very helpful, and I await very eagerly their report. I hope it recognises some of the progress we have made, but also if it can shine a light on some of the things we need to improve then that can only be helpful.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

You would expect government to respond for additional recommendations.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Absolutely. The previous government committed to implementing the recommendations of the care inquiry. A whole load of stuff has happened since then. I could not fathom a situation where we got a report back from them, having agreed in the first instance, that they should come back for a second round to have a look at things and not take heed of what they say. I think that would be politically impossible and that is a very helpful situation to be in because it forces us to treat these things seriously.

The Deputy of St. John:

What is your assessment of the greatest development: legislation underpinning the role of the Children's Commissioner?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

The process of getting there? Interesting; certainly an interesting process.

The Deputy of St. John:

Which is why we asked the question.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Indeed. It was obviously a first for Jersey to create a human rights institution like this, so I guess it was always going to be interesting. If everything had gone smoothly along the way then maybe that would have been a worrying sign. Having committed to having a Children Commissioner for Jersey in place before the legislation was written, I think, with hindsight, was a good idea because that enabled somebody to operate in shadow form and play a fundamental role in shaping that legislation without which it is very possible we may have ended up with a very different law, and one which may not be as robust as the one that we have ended up with. A whole lot of learning took place to get to the position of having the law in place, looking at all sorts of other jurisdictions, how theirs works not just U.K. (United Kingdom) ones, but other European models as well. I was quite involved in a lot of that and that was very enlightening to understand how this should happen. There was obviously a little bit of a speed bump towards the end of it in terms of the powers that the Commissioner ought to have had, and I said openly for the panel and on the floor of the Assembly that I thought we ought to have as strong powers as is possible and reasonable and legal for the Children Commissioner. As with everything, these things were a team effort and as more people get sight of something bits and pieces change, but I think partly down to the intervention of the Scrutiny Panel and also the work that the Commissioner, myself, the Chief Minister, and the Attorney General did at the end, I think we got a piece of law which is human rights compliant, and that gives her those robust powers, so an interesting experience for the Island and one that I am sure we will learn from if we go down this route again creating more institutions like this.

The Deputy of St. John:

You mentioned concerns that we had and, of course, those concerns were majorly about the Commissioner's ability to access information from social workers and other practitioners, which had in itself come within the legal framework of law officer's advice and she was concerned that she would not be able to access that information. How do you see that panning out? Because there is a significant change to what was, in the long run, a drafting process at the very end. Is she going to

be able to access the information she needs in spite of the fact that legal advice has been offered to her?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

It is an interesting tension that there is between getting that balance between letting her have all of the investigatory powers that she requires to fulfil the job and do it well, as well as those principles of legal privilege that are quite fundamental to how any society works and making sure we get the right balance there. I was concerned that to fall totally on one side there on this point of legal privilege would not leave her in a position where she could access information as and when she required it, or not quick enough, or have whatever excuses thrown at her in particular circumstances. In that period of time, that window we had where we knew we had a law that was potentially problematic in not giving her powers that she needed, and worries about its human rights compliance on that point of legal privilege. We had a window to get some form of arrangement in place that outlined how she will be able to receive information, what the process for that will be, how it can be challenged and what we have got to do as a government to make sure it is upheld. That was the protocol that the 4 of us signed, and that took many hours of work to make sure we got a process in place that everybody was happy with. I think it is a really good protocol because it firstly allows the Children Commissioner a direct line to the top if necessary, it has got a clause in it about this process being fast tracked if there is an emergency, and if she needs information quickly it will be considered a top priority. It will not just be on a list of thousands of responsibilities that a law officer's department has, this one stands out because of that arrangement and we have got our own commitment to look back on that arrangement 6 months after signing it to say I think this point is quite important because it is new territory for us that occasionally we go back and look at this and say, "Right, is this working?" When she has the full legal powers as the law comes into force and suddenly has all of these legal rights that she currently does not have because she is operating in shadow form to be able to take a second look and say, "Right, has that worked in practice when we anticipated it would in theory?" I think that process is quite strong and, again, quite unique for the Island in that we have not really had this sort of arrangement before.

The Deputy of St. John:

Are our children better protected as a result of this?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Definitely. To have an independent person like the Children Commissioner who has this commitment that she can receive information that is not what any ordinary person on the street could receive, and that she has got her own rights and responsibilities that are enshrined in her law and will empower her to be a person that people in vulnerable situations can go to if they need to seek

resolution in some form or another. That is hugely important and a drastic step forward from where we have been in previous years in Jersey.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Then the protocol, I see it, I think we see it as the default position being that she would have access where necessary, do you see that in the same way?

The Minister for Children:

Yes, I do, and there would have to be a case made for withholding information and it would have to be proven, well, not proven but they would make the case that it is not in the public interest for information to be disclosed, at which point we can have an argument then. It is better to have an argument about information being withheld than to have to argue to get any piece of information in the first place, so that I think falls on the right side there.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay. There is a shift, yes. Okay, anything else on that?

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes, how do you think it was sensed though that this legislation for the Children Commissioner's role was what it was, but then came back without this role that there seemingly had to be the Assembly and our panel scrutinise it to come to some arrangement and put it in. How do you think that could have been perceived by people who have been following this for many years? Also, at the same time the independent panel were here as well, what is your sense of how that process may have been perceived?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I think it shows that we can never get complacent about any of these things and that having people in particular key positions, whether that is Chief Minister, whether it is the Minister for Children is not enough, this is something that everybody in our society, particularly people in the public sector, have got a particular duty on things like this to understand these principles wholeheartedly, not to just think, "Oh, that is something on the side", but to live and breathe it and have it as just part of what our organisation does. I have said right from the very start that that part of our journey is going to be particularly difficult getting people to just live and breathe this and have it underpinning everything we do as an organisation, and this is probably a sign that that can be difficult sometimes and that sometimes the road can be a bit bumpy. But the most important thing is that we got to the right position in the end though and that our processes did work well there, in that we had a scrutiny panel that did very good work on that and was treated seriously. I hope you will agree with me when you produced your work, I thought it was very helpful for what we were trying to do and we had a series

of people who were prepared to give large amounts of time at short notice to make sure we got this right, including the Chief Minister himself, who took a very close interest in this. You would want every process we undertake to be perfect and when there are bumps along the way at least we have arrived at the right decision here, but it highlights the fact that we can never get complacent about any of this.

The Deputy of St. John:

It strikes me that if we had not waylaid the proposal going forward and amended that proposal, then we might have been held up by the panel to be continuing to do things in the Jersey way I think my recommendation certainly when we were going to be speaking about that in a moment or two. I do not know how, what was the thinking behind such limitations that would not lead into the trap of going back to doing it the way it was always done before?

[14:30]

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Yes, everybody has a different perspective, people have their entrenched positions and their entrenched ways of doing things, and I know that is not a good enough excuse and I do not call it an excuse, but it is just what happens, and this sort of thing probably happens in all sorts of much less important areas on a daily basis. Organisations can get complacent, people cannot treat issues as seriously as they ought to and sometimes this stuff just happens.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Is it not a classic committee decision where perhaps they should have let the people who once they knew what they were talking about, but had a clearer view of what was necessary, had more of a say i.e. yourself?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I think that is a good way of putting it. I was describing that particular article at the time as a camel in that it is a horse designed by a committee, if that makes sense. Therefore, when further pairs of eyes get put on some things, stuff can get changed and watered down and taken away from where things were when a closer smaller group of people were looking at things, but that is government and that probably happens all the time, we have just got to stay vigilant.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Just one last thing on that, do you think that perhaps the Council of Ministers is more aware for the future of not making those mistakes, if I put it that way?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I think so. I think partly the clarity that you provided in your report and other ministers read that and saw it and it went, and if it had been something that had not concerned them previously they would have looked at it and gone, "Oh, these are really good points", we have got to be more aware of this stuff in future. I think that is the case and I think that is a very healthy thing because it will always be useful to be able to go into a Council of Ministers meeting and know that I am sat round a table with people who get it, and even if it is not what they do on a day to day basis in their departments it is just no good to be in a situation where people are not paying attention and I think that will happen more now as a result of this.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Can you give us an update on the progress implementing the recommendations from the Jersey Youth Justice steering group's review of the Youth Justice system please?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

It is incredibly early days at this point. We have only just published that report, and we are not clearly in a position of being able to say here is one action point we are going to achieve, we will have done it by this time and it will have cost this amount of money. We are not quite at that point yet and the steering group that put the report together is continuing and will be coming up with action plans that will be presented to us. I do not know if Mark knows any more about the timescale for that.

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

The work needs to start in earnest now, inevitably it is linked into the government planning process because of the resource implications, but nonetheless a joint steering group between Justice and Home Affairs and Children and Young People, Education and Skills will review the recommendations going forward and, as the Minister said, proposals about how to proceed against them. I think that work should be achievable within a relatively short space of time because that is the relatively straightforward bit about responding to a report. I would be expecting that later this year the first set of outcomes around what we need to do next materialise. The trick as I have just said though is linking that to the government plan and the use of the government's resources over the next 3 to 4 years are taken into account in relation to implementation costs of the review.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

On the point about resourcing and costing it, the thing we cannot lose sight of is that the more of this we get right the more that is saved in the long term, because you provide young people with the skills and the opportunities that they need to get off to a good start in life, rather than have people who end up costing a lot more money if they are perpetually going in and out of a justice system all the time and that will not appear on any balance sheet. It will not be easy to attribute a particular

saving because you have managed to take any number of people out of a system that is not working, and putting them in a much better place. That will be difficult to show as tangible.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Were you surprised by much of it? There were similar themes I thought that came out that should not really surprise a lot of people, but maybe it did. What was your take away on it?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I found the report very helpful in terms of its overarching analysis of what a youth justice system should look like. It chimed in with what I believe is right, which is that you treat young people as children and young people first, and not as offenders first. If your pure motivation is revenge and punishment I think all the evidence around the world, when you look at all different justice systems not just for young people but for adults as well, is that that simply just does not work, and it ends up putting you in a much worse position. Whereas looking at what you can do to support people, lots of people end up in these situations because they have not had great educational opportunities or the report also talked about difficult social conditions. That is something that I think more people in the Island are understanding in recent years as they may have done previously. I think to get the government to commit to a new way of looking at youth justice done along these lines is significant progress given that a few decades ago when some of the worst stuff was happening that the care inquiry looked at, the attitude was often lock them up somewhere where they are not going to be in plain sight for everyone and that that just serves nobody's interests. It chimed in philosophically with what I wanted to see and I think helps make the case and takes us in that direction. That has got to be a positive thing.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

The immediate work you mentioned there as well, because it is the issue about social isolation that really jumped off the page and also very close to our hearts the mental health review will be looking at businesses under the portfolio of Jersey, Orchard House and others. However, we are simply not moving fast enough to provide places of safety and places that not just hold people and put them somewhere, but to start their rehabilitation to help them. Do you agree that that work is not happening quickly enough? We have just had yet another report that says there are stuff that is happening as we are saying it is positively changing, but the thing that is not happening quick enough is the safe places, the ideology of it.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Yes, one of the weird problems to have is the economies of scale here, when you are a small island and often dealing with sometimes only one person, that can be how small the numbers are. To provide a whole system of support around them can be really difficult to do, especially when you

have to provide premises to do that from as well and if a premises is not built for a particular purpose that can be really, really difficult to get things right there when ultimately you want as few people as possible going through this but the ones who do go through it you want them to have the absolute best opportunities they can while they are going through that to help them. So it is odd that it is good that the numbers of people particularly in youth detention have gone down but the other side to that is that you get issues with social exclusion as a result of that and that is difficult and we have got to think about how we can respond to that and some of that stuff will not be able to happen overnight because it might mean changing premises and how they look and work and you cannot simply do that overnight.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

It sort of leads us into the next thing we are going to ask about the children's legislative programme. Can you give an update on what has been happening in implementing phase one of that? I know part of that is the criminal procedures in relation to children and young people. So what has been happening so far with that?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

So December last year we published the children's legislative programme. It has got phases for how we want to approach this. I think that again going back to what the care inquiry had said about the lack of prioritisation that we had given social legislation in the past, that is helpful to have a commitment and a timeframe to look at some of this. I will openly say that I am frustrated at the slow timetable we have set some of it and if you spoke to any of my officers I am sure they would corroborate that that I have been pushing for some of this to be done quicker. So there are a few bits that we have made good progress on, you mentioned the criminal procedures law, sexual offences law is on there as well and the children's commission law obviously we have spoken about. That is a really important step, there are things that are coming to me in the next few months, some of that will be options of moving forward on particular pieces of legislation so looking at better support for care leavers, and enshrining that in law and what we do to support them. I think I am getting something at some point this month to talk about what our options are there and how we can proceed with that and there are other things as well. The big one for me I think is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrining that in Jersey and presenting a due regard model which we have spoken about previously. So all of that is on our agenda, we have published the timetable which I hope we can be held to account on, and there are things in the next few months that are coming to me that will require a decision about what model of law we use or how far we go on particular items.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Some of those things touch on other departments do they not, home affairs and education and so on, is that helping or is that a hindrance, because there is so much restructuring going on, do you think that restructuring is helping this happen or is it perhaps one of the reasons why it has taken a little longer than you would hope?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I mean I feel like we are in a good position. Of course I would say that would I not? But because it is a unanimous view around the table that putting children first is our top priority I am not particularly feeling much push back from others about anything. The main difficulty is that if we wanted to progress some of this faster there are just not enough hours in the day. One thing that I am particularly frustrated about and I will be open about this is discrimination against tenants with children. I would like that to be dealt with much quicker than it is because I am sick and tired frankly of going on estate agent's pages on the social media and them advertising properties saying, "No children", and me looking at it and thinking well, that is a 3-bedroomed flat with no balcony or anything like that, what are you doing, of course that is suitable for children and just how that fits in with the programme of legislation there is on the social security side I am finding frustrating. I would prefer that that sort of thing got pushed quicker but I have to accept that there is only so much you can do in the time you have got and writing good law is not always simple and often it touches on dozens of other pieces of legislation and you have got to make sure that everything connects properly.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

But are we seeing changes for people's lives now and perhaps this is for the others here as well, can we say that after phase one during phase one we are seeing people's lives being improved on a daily basis? This was 8 months ago that you started, 9 months ago this child's life was like this, can they say that now their life is better because of some of the changes that have happened here? I am just horribly practical about these things, I think that is the key.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

It is the central question is how does this reflect on the lives of people, you can talk about legislation and passing something in the chamber but...

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I think that is something that we will come back to later as well, I think you are right.

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

The answer has to be small steps. I am hopeful but I am not going to pre-empt anything that the return of the care inquiry might say but by way of example I think the different provision that is now

being made for young people who need to access residential care. The development of a larger number of smaller units for example I think is seen as a positive step forward so there are things that are happening slowly but surely and I think slowly but surely is the best way to describe it, they are small steps but behind those small steps or underpinning those small steps are the more significant things for me which is slowly again getting towards having a more stable social work workforce for example that is taking its time, a workforce that knows what the Jersey way of doing social work should be and practices it and is supported and challenged. So those things are slowly coming into place. There will be mixed reviews out there, I am absolutely clear about that, not everybody is noticing change but some people are noticing some change and I think the shift in the model of residential in particular is something that is at least for a small number but it does not matter whether it is a small number or not that it has started to impact.

The Deputy of St. John:

The idea is absolutely marvellous in comparison with residential care in the past in that you take a small group, a very small group of children and you lodge them with, if you like, residential parents more or less.

[14:45]

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

We live in an environment that is much more like and is deliberately supposed to be like being a parent, absolutely, yeah.

The Deputy of St. John:

So if we are going to create units of this type in larger numbers it will mean engaging rather more not social workers because residential social workers are generally speaking not social workers with degrees and so on, they tend to have a parental role rather than a social work role and that is my understanding but they get a level of training of course. But you create jobs as it were in these smaller institutions and where are the people going to come from given our current experience of not being able to get people in the community to offer day care, to offer respite care, to offer the sort of care that other vulnerable children require. Is that problem being addressed is it?

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

So I think where we have begun with that nonetheless is around social work, and probably need to be clear about the prioritisation of things, so you will know that the strategy for delivering a long term sustainable capable social work workforce as opposed to the wider social care workforce is to start to address what is rightly seen as an imbalance between those on Island and those off Island, those permanent, those temporary. So that is underway and the recruiting that we have been doing under

the “Let’s Be Honest”, campaign, is slowly but surely bearing some fruit. It is a long burn but that is where we needed to start, we knew that one of things that was most significantly affecting the delivery of consistent high performance was the churn in that workforce and the need not only to stabilise it, make it long term but also then to provide the learning and development. I think in the wider sphere that you are talking about some of this relates to the sufficiency strategy that we have spoken about previously so it is not just about pure numbers any longer, it is also about the changing models, so we also want to have a reduced reliance on residential care anyway because we want to get much more into the intensive fostering element of the strategy so that we are providing different kinds of longer term placements, ones that do not require the more traditional model of residential care and that means that we are looking not so much at is it a different professional workforce within children’s services but it is the extent to which we develop more and greater capability within the fostering community as well. So it is not as straightforward as ...

The Deputy of St. John:

So how are you trying to encourage foster carers to come forward?

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

I think the Minister may well want to speak about that because fostering fortnight has just recently completed and you were ...

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Susan may also wish to chip in potentially on this, so I do not know how much I am allowed to say at the moment but there are bits that we put into the government plan to try and get some extra funding to support people who want to become foster carers. This is something that historically we have struggled with, I mean I remember previous campaigns this going on and a few years later we are in the process of having another campaign. We are I think promoting this just generally I think quite well, and perhaps better than we have in previous years. The people who are doing amazing things for vulnerable young people are being celebrated in a way that perhaps they might have not been previously. There are some structural things that we need to get to grips with though in terms of how we provide support for people who want to be foster carers, how we can make that something that is easier for people to do and get people in a position where they can do it, there are lots of people out there who would be perfectly capable but perhaps do not realise or do not quite understand what the process is they would have to go through to become it, but it is on our agenda, we are looking to get some funding to do things with, I do not know if Susan wants to add anything to that.

Group Director Children’s Services:

Susan Devlin, Group Director, yes, we want to develop an intensive scheme, you will have heard it probably being talked about as a level 4 scheme or a professional scheme and I know we have talked about and indeed the care inquiry in the report mentioned that. The difference between an intensive fostering scheme as opposed to what we have now is that we be very clear that the fee that we want to pay people because what they receive is an allowance for the child and a fee for them as a carer, that that fee has to be sufficient that they do not have to work because the needs of a child going into an intensive fostering scheme are of such a level that you need to be available, it is essentially a 24/7 job so you might be helping out at school, you might be helping out with health needs, whatever, so we need to make sure that the fee structure allows people to be at home working with the child or children. One of the other things that makes those schemes a success is as the Minister said the level of support, so while children's services do have a 24/7 on call service for emergencies foster carers are probably best served by someone who understands the fostering task in greater depth. So we are looking at the on call support arrangements that we would be able to put in place because in an intensive scheme you would be dealing with children or young people who have a significant level of needs. Because we want to develop this scheme as an alternative to other specialist provision and we want to build around wrap around services around that child so that there is a real team around the child in a family based placement. We know that children do best by and large and there are some small exceptions in a family placement so that is what we need to get to. So that is what we are doing, one of the other things, you were saying how will you get them, we may start to look at specific recruitment campaigns, you may have seen it in other media that other people use, so they do an anonymised version of a child's situation, a child's profile, and that can quite often speak more directly to somebody if they know little Johnny here are his difficulties, here are his needs but here are also what makes him happy, how he responds well. People can get a better picture and understanding of how they might work with that child, how they might operate, how they might nurture and love that child. So we might do a bit more of those very specific adverts in the hope of encouraging people forward.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

So you think that in the past where people would have had to had a full time job and take this on as an extra-challenging situation you are reliant upon people's good will. I do not know if the phrase is good will but their ... I do not know what the word is actually.

Group Director Children's Services:

I think there are different levels. I think with some children who could be relatively straightforward if I might use that terminology it is okay if people have a job because they can in the way that many of us go out to work when we have our own children I think it depends which level of need you are talking about, some of the challenges, what you are being asked to do as a foster carer is different so I think it can vary depending on need.

The Deputy of St. John:

Are you including those who might have a brush with the law. Because some of those youngsters are probably in greatest need.

Group Director Children's Services:

I think if I may Minister, I was not sure if you wanted to answer or not, the short answer is yes, we know that many children and young people who get involved in offending behaviour will have been the very children who at an earlier stage will have had real significant issues about care and protection or other traumas in their past so I guess that goes back to the principles about youth justice, the child is a child, they are not a mini adult and we must treat them. So you have got to treat their needs as well as their deeds and the criminal behaviour does not exist just in isolation, it is part of a range often of complex needs and behaviours.

The Deputy of St. John:

And do you think you are going to be able to take the sort of people that Greenfields has taken in the past into that foster environment?

Group Director Children's Services:

I think if we get the fostering scheme correct, I think if we get the support correct and if we can encourage people to come forward who are resilient, who are very emotionally resilient as well as practically and physically I do not see why not, we have done that quite successfully in other jurisdictions, so I do not see why not in Jersey if we take some care about the model, make sure we recruit and assess and train carers appropriately, yes.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Okay. That leads me on to Greenfields, I am back here. But I want to start with a different tack, I have noticed of late and it would not surprise me being somebody who has worked in the media when there was a report recently on ITV where the reporter requested an interview and never got one, is that a policy decision? Because this is such a sensitive area, since the care inquiry and we are all here today working together to move forward in a positive proactive way but is it a decision that when allegations like this come either through Jersey in the Post or television or whatever that we do not do interviews on this subject matter, is that policy decision, is that just a decision you have decided that is not going to be how it is?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

It is not a decision that I have lightly made, I am not 100 per cent sure what sorts of incidents you are referring to though, I do not know about the ITV one.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Well, the ITV report recently where it was around Greenfields, and they requested an interview and they got a statement instead and there was another time, I do not have this one it was a Jersey Post report saying I think they requested an interview about a similar subject to do with young people and they were not given an interview, they were given a statement and I posed the question that if that is the trend that it could be perceived again from outsiders that why are they not giving interviews, why are they not, do you see where I am coming from?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Yes, I do.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

So is there a policy decision when we talk about such sensitive areas which has gone through a care inquiry process that we do not do media interviews, that is just a policy decision or not?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I do not know if there is a pre-existing policy on this, it is not a decision I have made, I mean my personal approach to some of these issues is that there is nothing wrong with saying no to an interview if in your judgement it can be unhelpful for a situation. Yes, obviously on difficult subjects we should not be shying away from difficult questions and should be giving clear answers to that, but there can be occasions where shining a light on an officer or a politician can be counterproductive and I regularly refuse to do interviews on subjects if I think there is a person at the heart of this who will not benefit from this or if only part of the story is going to be covered when there is a broader scheme of things here. I do not know if that is a particularly helpful answer but it is not a policy decision I have made but I can see circumstances where it is perfectly justifiable to say no it is not appropriate to be talking about this now, we have got to deal with the situation first.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Because the thing obviously about this report, it was an investigative report, allegations were made, obviously the part of that process is to hear the other side and say here is the allegation, there was a health and safety inspector report 2017, we are reporting it on television for every day folk to hear, people would want to as part of that process of storytelling here from a senior manager, a director general or the minister responsible and if that continues not to be the case do you not agree that an assumption will be made that they are not speaking, they are covering it up again, here we go again, they are refusing to face the camera, whoever that person is, manager, director general or minister so is it just while this process is going on you tell the staff do not talk to the media we will release a statement or is it not the case at all and it is something we could be looking at?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I think there is probably an assumption, one of my officers can correct me here if I am wrong here, that when we are talking about individual cases that it is inappropriate to be in the media talking about details and that can be difficult when a particular journalist may want to push on something that is not appropriate to talk about because of the wellbeing of a particular person at the heart of it.

[15:00]

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

This report definitely was not about an individual. It was about Greenfields and the as we all know the review that is going on, the health and safety review that was issued, there were concerns made public and obviously it featured heavily in the care inquiry. So what you are saying is if another investigative journalist in any media, radio, television media did a similar report and they requested an interview to talk about and ask the questions about things that have come in the report, that they should approach you and say can you provide the relevant director general, minister or you yourself, that will be something going forward to be looked at?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Generally speaking, yes, if it is in the public interest to respond to things that are said or to provide an update on stuff that is going on to address things then the presumption should be yes, but there are obviously circumstances where it is not appropriate and you do have to recognise that sometimes the media get things wrong and how you work with that.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

But then so do politicians, which is why we have had a credit inquiry so the point here is that, well, if that is the case then that needs to be also made clear, that also was not made clear in this process. So going back to the Greenfields everybody knows that I have been banging the drum about Orchard House and the building is totally unfit for purpose which is housing people in moments of crisis including young people, so what are we doing with Greenfields? We are in the same position here, is there only one child still at the moment?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

The last time I went there was, yes.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Is it going to be phased out, shut down, closed down eventually? Is that in any of the plans going forward? Could you commit to that? Or is it going to remain? Because I think there was also talk about training in the summer to start us off, so just an overview of what is going on at the moment and what are we going to end up doing with Greenfields, is it time to just close the curtain on the story?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

So the report itself has not been published yet, but that is on our agenda at some point, I do not know if Susan wants to add to that because we obviously want to get there at some point, I do not know what we can say at this stage or not though.

Group Director Children's Services:

I think what we can say is that Greenfields for a very small number of children Greenfields offers a safe place, it offers us a custodial option for children and young people that is not H.M.P. (Her Majesty's Prison) Le Moye which helps us in relation to the rights of the child and the U.N. (United Nations) convention, it also helps us deal with children in a children's facility and not an adults' jail, so for that reason certainly I would not want to see our secure provision disappearing. I think that withholding somebody's liberty is a very serious matter and as the officer delegated by the Minister where we have a very short term authority, a 72-hour authority for children in need of care and protection that has been in the 4 years I have been here I have used that a handful of times, not the old days of high numbers. But I think where I have signed those children and young people into secure care it has been the right thing to do, they have met the criteria in the legal sense but it has also been in their best interests. I think most of those children and young people would also agree once they had been able to reflect on things, not all of them because who necessarily wants their liberty withheld, so I think there are in a very small number of cases there is still a requirement for children sometimes to be in secure care and I use the term secure care rather than secure accommodation because it must be about care as well as the external controls obviously of the lock and key. So I think it is important for Jersey but it is a sizable provision just now, it was built at a time that I think we thought the need would be much greater. I think the recent review of youth justice has made the comment about it is heartening to see those numbers dropping, and that is completely appropriate. But I think there will be times when we may continue to need secure care and I think for the youth justice reasons it would be a retrograde step not to have Greenfields or secure care.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

What would the alternative be?

Group Director Children's Services:

La Moye, it would be La Moye if it was a custodial sentence, I think of course the courts have to consider very seriously about any custodial sentence for a younger person without a doubt and it should be there is no alternative, no safe alternative. At the moment the alternative would be La Moye, I have to say that since the young offenders legislation came into place and the establishment of the placement panel which if somebody is made subject to a custodial sentence or remanded in custody the placement panel meets to determine where that period of custody should be served, not one young person has gone into La Moye, all of them have gone into Greenfields.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Do you think it was too readily giving custodial sentences before was part of the problem? To young people I mean.

Group Director Children's Services:

I think that was certainly one of the comments in the care inquiry, I think there is no doubt about that and previous reports. We would not have been the only jurisdiction to have done that, I think we have learnt more over the last 15, 20 years, I think Jersey may have been a bit slower to learn some of that, and I think hence that is why the youth justice report and the focus on welfare and the childcare system is the way to go, it is absolutely the most effective way to go.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I suppose in an ideal situation Greenfields would be empty because there are no custodial sentences, however would you want it as a facility in case, so it could be something that is not mothballed but something that... it is a very difficult situation I suppose.

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

So this will inevitably and correctly and helpfully come here when the report is here and consideration is given to the recommendations. I would almost like to turn this conversation around and not talk about so is Greenfields open or closed but what is it with the framing that the Minister has given of looking at children and young people as children and young people with care and welfare needs who have had a brush with the criminal justice system. What is it that is required across the whole spectrum of that care and then make some decisions about where, so physically what does that look like, where do you need it? I think if you start from we have Greenfields and it presently looks like this and this is what it has done up to now potentially you constrain the thinking because you are trying to adapt something that might not ... I just do not think that is the right starting point, I am not trying to head you off from what are we doing at Greenfields, I am trying to say there is a set of principles we should work from.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

You are right, but there is the other argument that the reason why it is so empty is because there has been so many issues that had a culture of fear as picked up in the care inquiry and obviously I have even read people wary of sending young people there because they worry about sending children there, so not to be paranoid about it but there are issues there that people are not going to want to send children there because it is the best facility for them because we know it has failed, there is a review going on which tells us that there have been problems, so we need it fit for purpose to as what you are saying, but we cannot remain complacent because it is all about restoring trust for the people who need to go there.

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Yes, and providing a restorative, I know I am talking jargon but I am talking about a restorative environment as well where what they have done does not define them, what they have done in the past, sorry, does not define them, it is what they do about that and how they move forwards in there.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

The same for the services.

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Absolutely.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

So with the training can you confirm because am I right that further training for staff is this summer, will be completed by this summer?

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

So I think part of the written response to those questions about Greenfields was that there was further training, training had already been underway for some time and there is further training underway or due to be underway this summer, you are correct, yes.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Okay, and the review do we know when that is going to be completed and timetable and that?

Group Director Children's Services:

I think it is going through the various governance structures now and I would hope that we over the summer would be able to get into a position of publishing.

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Yes, sorry, I mean something that is going through those stages that you are more than familiar with, but sooner rather than later I think know, I do not think we as officials believe that any more work now needs to be done on the report, it just needs to start to go through the system.

The Deputy of St. John:

It occurs to me it might be a good idea for we as a panel to go and visit Greenfields and chat to the staff.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I would recommend visiting as many facilities as possible and meeting people and speaking to them, you get such a better understanding when you do that.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

It is something that has come from the public hearing with the care inquiry so it is the public record, so it is about what this panel will be doing and we will probably talk to you about that at the time but that is certainly we need to be doing. I think we are in a phase if you like of us being more proactive in terms of looking for the change rather than just checking on the changes that you have been making as well which I think is useful and coming back to perhaps one of the real huge issues of the Jersey work are you satisfied that the actions set out to respond to the recommendation 7 are sufficient to address the overwhelming concern of the Jersey way? It is a generic question on purpose with a specific example but I am thinking more public engagement, openness, transparency and accountability, confidence in the system of government.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

It is one of those things as a Jersey man I know what my understanding of the Jersey way is and I understand what my interpretation of the negative connotations of it are and I have a view on some of the things that will fix that or the things that I resent in our system that I think need changing to address that, some of which I am probably not going to get, some may get annoyed at me for saying this but I think the issue of the dual role of the bailiff has been handled terribly and I think it has been handled terribly because of a minority of people on the Island but many of them politicians who just do not get it, do not get that it is not appropriate to have a link between your legislature and your judiciary and it looks weird and it is great for those people who want to say well, that is just the Jersey way, that is how they deal with things and brush things aside. There is a lot of people who still do not get that point and believe any attempts to change it are somehow anti Jersey. We have a proposition coming up on our electoral system, 14 Members of our parliament were elected uncontested last time round. That is undemocratic, and it is a sign of poison in the system and there are going to be politicians who will find an excuse to reject a proposal to fix that when it has been published not just in the care inquiry but in previous reports that it undermines your democratic

process and if you have a poor democratic process people will not trust the government and to rebuild trust that has got to be addressed. So you can probably tell that I am quite frustrated by some of these issues because they are not being dealt with properly here. But there are some things that I think we are doing well on and we will see the proceeds of that I hope sooner rather than later, one important thing is about administrative redress, establishing a public services ombudsman, so that decision was made by the previous assembly, and we are doing the work for that at the moment, I think something will be coming in autumn with options about how we can go about establishing that. That is really important because I think lots of people acknowledge that the complaints board that exists at the moment is not capable of fulfilling that role properly and we need a public services ombudsman. So that is an area that I think we are doing better at but this is so difficult to get to grips with the Jersey way because it means so many different things to different people and people who are doing the right thing in some areas often have a blind spot to this and this is really difficult.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I am thinking we can count Jersey way in those terms but one of the failings has been that young people in care historically have had an inconsistency and those who are assisting and helping with them and the problem we have got with recruitment and retention and so on and as they move through the system those who may be in care and some of whom may be on long term need deal with a social security system where exactly the same thing is happening again. There is no dedicated person who would deal with their case, gets to know them and knows how to help. That individual may have complex needs, and navigating themselves through the social security system I do not know if you have ever tried that it is nigh on incomprehensible system and do you see that this is what I mean about the restructuring, it does not seem to be hitting that nail on the head in terms of look we have seen that happening lower down the system in terms of age I mean with care and as these people move forward and may need support from our society as they go through they encounter the same issues again.

[15:15]

The Minister for Children and Housing:

If institutions are not focused on people and people's wellbeing then that is inevitably the consequence of it. If you are focused on numbers on a spreadsheet and if you are focused on reputation as well that has been one thing that has not been handled well in the past and if people who go through a system feel like they are not valued or cared about they are of course going to disengage with it and not see the value of an institution and it is not their fault for being in that position, it is the fault of the institution for not being welcoming and having a personalised attention to people who have got particular complex needs that they might not tick that box or tick this box.

So the point about the social security I cannot answer why better reforms have not been made to that system. As a constituency representative I know of a handful of people that I have encountered who I have attempted to help whose lives are in such a situation where for them to simply turn up into a building, take a number, you used to have to pull it yourself off the wall but now they have got someone there to guide you in the right direction and speak to a different person somebody you have never spoken to before who you are explaining your story to for the 10th time or whatever and occasionally get inconsistent advice, often not for any bad reason just somebody has interpreted something slightly differently or whatever, having it more people focused is essential. But it is not just down to me as the Minister for Children to push that agenda, that is something we all need to be pushing to say our outcomes here should not purely be economic, they have to be about our wellbeing, not just of our children but everybody and that is going to be very difficult because for a long time I think it has been the opposite, it has just been you provide it because you are required to and everything else is an extra and if you cannot be bothered then it does not happen.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I think that naturally leads us on to a question about your role if I may jump a couple of questions if you two do not mind in terms of it has been 11 months since you were officially appointed and we talk about intentions and we can all see I think that these issues that we face throughout our government be it social security, health, housing, education, some more directly affect children and your role as Minister for Children do you find that it is too difficult a role for one person put frankly? Is it definable because of the nature of government?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I found that some of it is not as difficult as you would think because there are enough people in the organisation and some of the restructuring has helped with this where people are taking a more cross-departmental look at things and I certainly feel like on the children's side of things some silos are being broken down and people are because they are focusing on an outcome for children and young people what part of the organisation you are coming from is less relevant than maybe it was previously and that is really good because that will help us get into a much better situation. I have found politically the thing that is always going to be difficult but is particularly difficult now is funding and it always will be on an island that proclaims itself to be low tax low spend there are always going to be tough questions, but that is politics for you. I would personally take a different view on low tax and low spend and I personally think that there would be a lot more we could do if we had a different model but that is not down to one person, that is not even down to the politicians, it is down to voters in the islands to determine the direction. We just have to do what we can and I think we are in a very good place all things considered because we have that consensus round the table that this is number one priority, we have guidance provided to us by the most comprehensive investigation and

report that the island has ever seen and that is a very helpful thing. We will have to look back in a few years and judge whether we did everything right but I am confident we are on the right track.

The Deputy of St. John:

A redress scheme for those who suffered abuse in the past will go live in July. Could you explain why responsibility is being delegated to the director general of strategic policy?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

So politically how do I describe this? I mean I would just think that that would be common sense in that somebody has to be the focus point in the organisation for getting it done. We have had a redress scheme in the past, we have now got a new one, the government has made the decision to create a new one and there are some slight alterations to the previous one and how it can be administered and I would just assume that that would just be the way it would be done.

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

I think there is continuity in there as well. You know that what is now the S.B.B.B. 15:20:41 (?) department picked up the initial responsibilities for taking the recommendations of the care inquiry forward so in that respect it makes perfect sense for those people who have not changed even though the departmental structure has to take it forwards.

The Deputy of St. John:

So the next question has to be how are you publicising the facility to the general public and those people that were significantly abused in the past?

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

So I can partially answer that, I might have to ask Andrew to help me with it please but I think because there are some external parties anyway whether potential claimants or legal representatives who are very well sighted on what the government has been doing with this subsequent scheme that some of the publicity has already occurred in that they are already aware and have been waiting for the scheme to be accessible. In terms of further promotion then I think we will be clear as a government about the range of people that may well fall within the scope of this scheme and there will be some proactivity around that.

Director Children's Policy:

Hello, my name is Andrew Heaven, I am the children's policy lead, I just echo what you said, that the details of how the promotion of the redress will happen in July so we can bring that detail to the panel just to say that I think.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

To reiterate that a substantial number of people who will want to engage with this scheme will already be aware of it being imminent because of how they are getting legal advice up until this point and who they are going through so we anticipate that it will be front loaded in terms of people who come forward for it.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Sort of related in the same area the Jersey Citizens' Panel in relation to a lasting memorial what has happened with that? Where are we with that while you are at the table?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

So a citizens' panel has been working very hard on this, I do not know if you have had an opportunity to read the report but they put a report with their recommendations together, they have dedicated a lot of their personal time. I have met them and it is a very interesting group of people and the way that they have spoken to me about their ambitions and their hopes for this has been really moving. The Council of Ministers has agreed with the recommendations, some of these I think we anticipated being politically difficult but the citizen's panel themselves I think have been very helpful in so the Haute De La Garenne building for example was always going to be a difficult one but I think how they approached that has been helpful for bringing the Island together on that particular one. There are some things I know we have got to work out, one of the recommendations was to have a physical memorial to this, we have got to find a place for it for example and we want it to be noticeable and something people will see and recognise. There have been some discussions about incorporating it into the liberation scheme but obviously that is up in the air now so that sort of thing might require a bit of a rethink there maybe or maybe not. But the recommendations have been accepted in principle and work is ongoing on that.

Director Children's Policy:

Just to reassure people that monies has been identified for the memorial and that that does not have a time limit to it, so it is not a case of spend it quick before it is taken away. So that has been identified as has money for children's day and as the Minister says the panel has worked with a number of people in the community, so for example Chris Clifford, the Public Arts Commissioner, has really been helping the panel to think about what it might want to describe in a procurement competitive process and I know that they have spent a lot of time not doing what we all want to do which is to draw something and go, yeah, it needs to look like this but to do something quite deliberative so that we get the best outcome.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I guess we are going into quickfire round here looking at the time. Could you give us just a quick overview about any updates on the work being undertaken by the children's rights officers since starting in post?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

She I know recently went to Liverpool with a group of young people, I have not personally had an update on that yet so you asking me the question is a helpful way of getting me to use my initiative to have another chat with her and get her update.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Could you follow up with that as soon as you can because I think we really want to start, I think we have talked about this in the past of this accountability of getting updates and things through, instead of asking these questions now we can say thanks for this update, from what you have said to us could you just explain what this was, but how long has she been in post now?

Group Director Children's Services:

6 months and she has spent much of her first 6 months starting to make contact with children and young people in different types of placements so first priority was children on Island in the units. She has been making contact with children and young people placed off Island, she has been doing some work where some of them have wanted issues raised or comments that they have got or whatever, she has been helping them do some work around that, and she has been working with a group of children and young people locally and as the Minister said she has been away to a conference with them which was very successful and I think helped young people have a different view of themselves a little bit in terms of identity of being care experienced could also be a positive thing whereas before they may have felt that was something a bit of a stigma. But seeing other people being quite proud and claiming that identity was quite powerful for them and I think that there will be a short presentation at the corporate parenting board by the children's rights officer just in the next fortnight, I cannot remember the exact date. So she will talk through that conference.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

The key to her success is the set of standards of the role and of how you measure the success of things, so how is that working and is there any update on that?

Group Director Children's Services:

So that is a work in progress and we have asked to be quite outcome focused about how her work takes place so I think sometimes it is easy to go I saw x number of children okay, and the question is so what, so we have been asking the children's rights officer to do a bit of work on so what and

how do you measure that and how do you make sure that you are doing what it is that will assist children who are looked after and what they want to do. So it is a work in progress.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

So that is a work in progress because obviously she is working at the moment so there is obviously some criteria so I guess it is a moveable feast because obviously you want to see from day one you do not want to say right, we do this every year now let us try and work something out how successful so there must be something at the moment that is going on that can show the measurables, what the impact it is having? I know it is a work in progress.

Group Director Children's Services:

So I think it is pretty early days and I think if you think that we generally have around 90 of a population of looked after children that is a number of people to get round, we have got 20-odd off Island so there is also a time issue there. So it is also about making sure she is talking to other colleagues and staff about children's rights, what that looks like, making sure that is reflected where she is doing bits of participation with them, all of those kind of things.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I think I may have been invited to the corporate parenting board June 11th so I can see the presentation then. That will be a really useful thing to do.

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

That is why you are invited.

The Deputy of St. John:

Can I just briefly seek an update on where we are with recruitment and with training for social workers? Because I think there were some hiccups in training last time we met and recruitment is a work in progress. I would like to find out what progress has been made.

[15:30]

The Minister for Children and Housing:

So you will be aware of the, "Let's Be Honest", campaign we have been running, that is how do I describe that campaign, quite hard hitting I think in its focus has... I have not personally been to the recruitment fairs that the officers have been to but the feedback I have had is that they are getting people who are interested, I have got some numbers here if they are helpful, 203 registered enquiries, 103 applications, 35 candidates shortlisted and so far 11 offers made which is good. I am also aware that there are people who are currently working for us as agency staff who are

applying to be made permanent and that I think is particularly good news, firstly because they are already here but also that shows they will have had an impression that is positive. I have been to just speak to staff around the organisation and have been quite pleased at the way a lot of the agency staff talk about what is happening in Jersey, and the positivity there is about making progress so that is a good thing to see I think.

The Deputy of St. John:

11 offers made, how many have accepted so far?

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

I will confirm for you.

Group Director Children's Services:

6.

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Is it 6?

Group Director Children's Services:

6 are accepted, we are waiting for 3 to respond.

The Deputy of St. John:

Those people are they people with families and other peripheral difficulties they may have?

Group Director Children's Services:

I imagine some of them will but I do not know the full detail of all of those but there will be a mix because it is different posts so I think there are some newly qualified social workers who in all likelihood may come with less people with them I guess just because of ages and stages and then as we work our way through senior practitioners, team managers, people will be a bit more established in their family ties and things but folk have accepted so hopefully we can get them in and keep them.

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

So a different answer to it, well, maybe an answer to a different question but it will be helpful I hope is that we have recently recruited and the gentleman has now started to a role designed to effectively be almost describe it like your personal shopper so somebody who will get alongside all of the recruitment process and make sure that whether you are a lone worker coming here say from off Island or whether you are bringing family and if you have got family what school arrangements and

we have somebody who is working dedicatedly in that space now to make sure that some of the difficulties that you are more than familiar with that people coming to Jersey can find themselves presented with are given all the information, support and help that they need to arrive successfully and be able to do the job without having to worry about all the other things going on around them.

The Deputy of St. John:

Okay. Because we are now getting close to our time I think I would like to quickly update on the situation with regard training and the basic social worker training to think about and also additional skills training for existing social workers and social work assistance and so on and so forth.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Well, you know we have got the social work degree which is starting in September, I think interviews are taking place for that either now or have just taken place for 15 student places, obviously that is a long term thing and that is a few years there but that is a really positive thing because that will...

The Deputy of St. John:

Let us hope they do not all become probation officers.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

But in terms of in work training so we will come to that.

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

As she is doing so just again just something to preface the answer, so all of that professional development whether as a newly qualified or experienced social worker is very important but the more important piece of work we are doing at the moment is with the social care institute for excellence working alongside all of our social workers to develop the Jersey social work practice model. That in itself will reshape the learning and development programme that those social workers then follow in subsequent years, and I think that this is really quite an interesting and important moment in time as that work probably reaches a point this month where there is some definition to that model and then thereafter it is about starting to put the roots down and wrap the new learning and development around it. So you will recall I think from a previous session here asking us questions around systemic training, for example, I think Susan answered those, people's concerns about were we committed to it, if we were who... all of that is now wrapped up in what is going to be the model of social work on the Island and when we are clear about that then you can be clear what learning and development should go round it as well. However, in terms of kind of particular questions about what do we do still today and tomorrow while that comes into play, I need to hand across to Susan, if that is okay.

Group Director Children's Services:

I mean there is probably not much to add, the systemic practice that we talked about the last time has concluded, so a number of our staff successfully completed the accredited courses and the different levels. Much of it now is about us kind of saying okay, what have we learnt from that about how we organise that, what we have got from it, and the tie in is as we go forward with the social care institute for excellence I think it is wise that we kind of say right, what now, what does the model look like, what training do people need? But I think the important thing is that getting your social work qualification degree is only the start of something, it is not the end of it and I think the care inquiry very clearly highlighted that that people had lost practice, practice did not develop and we absolutely must guard against that. The people who did completely systemic practice I think have really seen the benefit of it and they are seeing it in their work, how they are approaching working with families and also how they are working with their colleagues.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I ask a general question and everyone can answer, taking turns if you want, so we have been a year, let us say we are a year in, let us summarise it as a year in, what would a child who is in care or needing support from children's services see now that they did not see a year ago or 18 months ago or 2 years ago? I have to go back to using very practical things, and it can be anything, it can be a nicer room to live in, an individual that they know for 7 months as opposed to 3 months, what will they see now, what reassurance can you give us as a panel, people listening and hearing that things are getting better for our children on this Island who are perhaps the most vulnerable? It is the question everybody wants to know the answer to and I think we should be quite frank when we talk about this.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Yes, and again because it is focused on the people who matter in this. I think at some point we will have to provide the stats that show how people are going through the system, how many social workers people are encountering in the space of a year, what the waiting times are or whatever for getting an appointment with this person or that person, at some point we need to be in a position I think to be clear about what has happened since this has been a focus and there will be green shoots there where people are because of the focus that there has been on the service I will hope... they may not necessarily recognise this but if their experience is better on those levels than what it would have been for somebody a year ago or 2 years ago then that is obviously a positive thing. More broadly than that though I hope that people will recognise that this is a priority for us and they are getting a focus that previously they would not have got, I have made the effort to go and try and speak to as many people as possible and see some of the homes that people are living in for example and I do not know if that would have happened in years gone by where it was not an item of political interest. So I hope that there is a recognition that that is happening and where some

progress is slow and I know that for certain things there are people, young people who are telling me that there is an issue that they are encountering that is not being dealt with quick enough and there are occasions where I have to say I am so sorry that it is not being dealt quick enough, but it is politics and it can be difficult sometimes to make certain changes.

The Deputy of St. John:

If I might come in, the rhetoric you are presenting is not giving people who are in immediate need a great deal of hope, you are talking about green shoots, we are a year into this particular parliament just over and the people that were in dire straits at the beginning of last year are still in dire straits today and I had today an email sent to the Chief Minister from an Island resident about the provision of respite care and you might have seen this, but if not you do know of the situation, we learnt this week from the Minister for Health that care for autistic children, the provision that the States have hitherto provided is going to be closed to new entrants. That is not a positive move is it, it does not reflect the nature of the rhetoric that the public are hearing. We need to know, we need to know and the public need to know when there is going to be a beneficial change for these families who are in desperate need and one of the difficulties we have is that for example the Minister for Health is making statements about autism, whereas you are making statements about other things. When I ask a question of the Minister for Health he passes it on to you, we are not quite sure and the public are not quite sure where we stand and whether or not the current system is going to allow fairly rapid responses to the difficulties that are outlined in this email.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

What is the question at the end there, so how do I respond to that or?

The Deputy of St. John:

My question is in my initial statement that when do we see action rather than simply rhetoric?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I do not accept that there has been only rhetoric in the past few years, there has been investment in services. Immediately after the care inquiry a whole range of things have been done so I would not accept that there have been no tangible improvements, but what I am perfectly prepared to accept is that for people who engage with the state in whatever area there will be some that will find sometimes things changing for the worse, respite is one area that I am absolutely aware of that is incredibly frustrating and difficult and I have met with people who were having a difficult time and I have had to look them in the eye and say I am sorry I cannot present you a solution to this right now, it is going to be something that has to be more long term and that must be devastating for a family to be in a position and I completely accept that and that is ...

The Deputy of St. John:

It is not just devastating but the charitable and private sectors are no longer able to provide the manpower to produce these services, but now we are discovering that health are not able to provide the manpower to produce these services either and we seem to be on a downward spiral rather than an upward spiral. When can we see a difference?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

The only thing I can respond to that is that it is on our agenda, there has been work that has been done in recent months in anticipation of the difficulties we are facing, recruitment being a large part of that, simply not having the number of people to perform a specific function. It is difficult and does not happen overnight, and there will continue to be difficult questions asked about funding, you know I have been open about that that there will be competing priorities, and while we might sort out one area where there is a problem something else may fall off somewhere else, that is government for you, it is difficult, sometimes you make great progress somewhere else, something else goes backwards and then you have to turn and deal with that and things never ever progress as quickly as you would like and I find that as frustrating as everybody else.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I was going to bring up a comment that was made today by a member of the S.E.B. (States Employment Board) about an exchange of sustainable savings and efficiencies that strengthen educational outcomes, to me sustainable savings and efficiencies do not strengthen educational outcomes just the same as the English speaking services that we want and would you agree there is an issue of we genuinely need to look at funding as a whole and we need to increase the pot not just move money from one parts of the pot that are insufficient to another part that is insufficient.

[15:45]

The Minister for Children and Housing:

There are areas where if you apply the dogmatic desire for efficiencies that exists in some political quarters it can be completely counterproductive because sometimes you are spending money as an investment particularly education is the obvious area here where people go through that system and if they have got better skills at the end of it, better prospects in life your whole society ends up in a better position from there, so that dogmatic view is not one that I have and one that I argue against when I encounter it and my approach to this as Minister has been if you have to spend money to improve the service or invest in people that has benefits down the line eventually and that is I think the attitude that we need to have on this.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay. I am conscious we are a little bit over the time, is there anything else anyone wants to say or anything you want to ask? Okay. Thank you for your time, and thank you for everybody who has attended and everyone who has watched and we call the hearing to a close.

[15:46]