



# Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny

## Panel

### Quarterly Public Hearing

## Witness: The Minister for Children and Housing

Friday, 2nd October 2020

**Panel:**

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

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour

Deputy T. Pointon of St. John

**Witnesses:**

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

Ms. S. Devlin, Group Director, Children, Young People, Education and Skills

Mr. M. Owers, Director of Safeguarding and Care

Mr. A. Heaven, Director of Children's Policy

[10:01]

**Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier (Chair):**

Okay, thank you, and good morning, everybody. Welcome to the quarterly hearing of the Minister for Children and Housing with the Scrutiny Panel. We will start off by introducing ourselves on this wet and wild day. We have had some technology issues because of it. I am Deputy Rob Ward and I chair the Children, Education and Home Affairs panel. Would the rest of the panel like to ...?

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

Deputy Louise Doublet, vice-chair of the panel.

**Deputy T. Pointon of St. John:**

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

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Senator Sam Mézec, Minister for Children and Housing, and my team ... there is quite a lot of noise in the background.

**Group Director, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Apologies, I was on mute there. Susan Devlin, Group Director with C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills).

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

Mark Owers, Director of Safeguarding and Care.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Is there anybody else who should introduce themselves, or if they do speak then perhaps they will introduce themselves then, that might be the quickest way to do things. Okay, let us get started. Minister, the first question we will ask regards Meadow View, which was the facility that was opened on 18th April and closed on 17th July. The panel was informed of the closure on 9th September after requesting to arrange a visit. We have since received a confidential document reviewing the 3-month operation of the facility. Why were details of the closure of the service not shared with the panel at the time of closure?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

That is a good question. I apologise if we ought to have done that sooner. I think it has largely just been quite a fast-moving situation and the last few months have obviously not been business as usual. So, apologies for that.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay. Why was it that the service had been stopped?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Stopped at Meadow View. So that was always to be a temporary arrangement. It was never intended that that would be a permanent move, and it was done in the first instance because we faced a huge amount of uncertainty with the General Hospital, not knowing what the future was going to hold with the pandemic, how bad things might get, how scary, frankly, things might get if there were particularly big numbers and operations having to change very significantly to keep people safe. So there was a view taken at the time that it would be right to move those young people to a different environment, purely as a precaution and to make sure that they could be supported in

a safe environment. So that was done with Meadow View and then eventually we got a clearer picture of where we stood, how the virus was in Jersey's community and what use of facilities we might have within the General Hospital, and also the fact that, speaking frankly, it was never particularly ideal to locate that sort of service at Greenfields when it provides another service there as well and it is not a natural co-location for that. So, I think the view was that it became safe again for it to go back. There was a period of time where we knew that the U.K. (United Kingdom) would not necessarily take young people from Jersey if that sort of emergency situation arose, and that is now not the case anymore. So, that is why things have returned in that respect.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Thank you. There are a couple of things that come from that. One is what the current inpatient facility for children and young people is now and also the age that that ends at. I would assume it is under-18 is children and young people for the facility. What is the current facility? Given that the other thing was a pilot scheme, what learning has taken place from the pilot scheme that could be incorporated to improve the facilities that are available now?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

I do not know if "pilot scheme" is the right term for it, but either way it was certainly a learning experience to do something differently. You are inevitably going to pick up on things. It is the case that from at least one parent of a young person who was at Meadow View that I did hear positive feedback about it and I passed that on to the team, just to bear that in mind for the future if we want to think about how the service is provided. But there are certainly things that were obviously not ideal and that would have been reinforced along the way. I know that some of the extra support that was provided for that change has been maintained since going back. I do not know if Susan will want to give some extra detail on that.

**Group Director, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Thank you, Minister. Chair and panel, just to say that there is no specialist inpatient C.A.M.H.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) provision on the Island. There never has been. What we have is the use of Robin Ward, the children's ward in the General Hospital, which offers short-term inpatient care. We often have the C.A.M.H.S. team reaching in and working alongside paediatric colleagues. Generally, if someone is so unwell or has a particular mental disorder, if you like, often under-18s will go off-Island for care, obviously within the terms of the law. On occasions - and I know we have talked at this panel before - if somebody is approaching 18, they may in exceptional cases go into Orchard House, which is not something that we are keen on. So part of the redesign just now in terms of the C.A.M.H.S. work - and we talked a little bit at our briefing the other day - is to look at whether there is a need for specialist inpatient services for C.A.M.H.S. It actually does not look like there is a need in terms of numbers for us to have an ongoing, open-all-

the-time inpatient service, but from time to time we may do. What we are then trying to do is start to build services that will be able to cope with young people in crisis, who may be able to look at home treatment programmes and intensive support for them in the community to avoid them having to come in to be inpatients. So we have gone back to business as usual, which is Robin Ward for children and paediatric care there, with support around them. What we have done post-Meadow View closing, Chair, is to move some of the resource that we had in terms of staff, particularly support staff, to follow those children and young people who were in Meadow View in their other placements and to return home and to the community. So we have tried to use that support a bit more upstream, but that is very much part of the work that we are doing with H.C.S. (Health and Community Services) and with colleagues in adult mental health services.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay, so Meadow View was set up because of the loss of the ability to send anyone off-Island. Now that off-Island ability is still there it will happen. Is that really the best way, though, to address that and how urgently do we need to address the facility that you are talking about, which may be ... I cannot think, there is a much better phrase but perhaps a pop-up facility?

**Group Director, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Kind of pop up, yes.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Yes, which is there, because I know there has been some real concerns over Robin Ward being the right place for our young people with a mental health crisis, and certainly Orchard House. So what is the timescale we are looking at there? We do like to be very practical on the Scrutiny Panel and just have a time that we can say ... are we talking months, years, weeks, decades?

**Group Director, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Minister, do you want me to continue?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Yes, please.

**Group Director, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

So we are engaged with our colleagues in H.C.S. just now really looking at what resource do we need to try and start the ball rolling with that. While we do that, normal arrangements apply and you are right, Chair, it is not always ideal if somebody is in a crisis for them to have to go to the U.K. I think irrespective of what facilities we have on-Island, because of our size we could not hope to always be able to meet particularly complex needs or a specialist disorder. So the chances are

even if we had something, pop up or all the time, there may be occasions somebody has to go off-Island, and that happens in the adult population as well. But we want to try and minimise that. We are doing some work just now to try and identify resource for 2021. There will be plans brought forward under the auspices of the Government Plan, obviously which Scrutiny will see and will go through the Assembly in the normal course of things, but we are working on that because we know it is something that we want to improve. So, there will be some work done over the next number of months with a view to pushing that on over a year or so.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay. Deputy Pointon had a question. Let us see what he asks because I have a question in mind as well. Deputy, do you want to just ...?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Yes. Rob, you mentioned Orchard House and we have not explored the use of Orchard House. I was just wondering how many young people have been sent to Orchard House in the recent past.

**Group Director, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

I do not have the figure off the top of my head. We had nobody during the COVID pandemic under 18 in Orchard House, is my recollection. I can, of course, send the correct detailed figures to the panel following this if that would be helpful.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

If you would not mind, please.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Can I just ask quickly, because I do not want to go too long on this topic, but given that numbers are increasing in the U.K. again in terms of COVID and there seems to be another raft of infection and so on, are we going to face the situation where we will need to reopen, if you like, Meadow View as a facility because we will again lose that off-Island facility? Is that a possibility? Is that something that is in the background as a preparatory step before we get to crisis point?

**Group Director, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Minister, if I may, some of the work we are doing just now, Chair, is to try and build on what we have learned. So while what you are saying could be a possibility and will be a contingency we need to think about, what we are trying to do is use the resources that we have, some additional resources during the COVID pandemic, and we have had further resources into C.A.M.H.S. So we are trying to use those resources to try and work with our population, which we have had increased referrals and we have had some people who have had to wait, so we are trying to work our way through some

of the issues there to offer more support. We are using some of those support workers, which we have never had before in C.A.M.H.S., to offer increased and more intensive support to children and families. So we are trying to build the work that we are able to do in the community and we will continue to. We have a particular link with one of the mental health partnership trusts in Essex now that we have been able to use in terms of beds if we needed to.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

So the answer is no, really, you are not looking to open that again? You think you can deal with it?

**Group Director, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

I certainly would only want to do that in absolutely exceptional circumstances.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay. We will move on to Deputy Pointon. Do you want to talk about the workforce training and sustainable workforce questions?

[10:15]

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Yes, fine, thank you, Chair. In the 6-month Government Plan progress report, it stated that specialist training across the children's workforce is currently on track. Can you elaborate on the training that is being covered by this particular project?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

I have in front of me quite a long list of various bits and pieces of training that have taken place, whether they have taken place virtually and how many staff and when those training events took place. Some of that I think might be better to hand over in written form just so you can see that. I do not know if Mark has anything to add on that as the lead for that, but we can provide a written catalogue of what has taken place if that is helpful.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

We will hear from you, Mark, sorry.

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

Thank you, Minister. Good morning, panel. We have been able to continue with the planned training in spite of COVID. In fact, in many respects the increased use of video conferencing has enabled us to gather people around training providers in an easier way. The main piece of training that we are rolling out across the whole of the service is restorative practice training. We are using the

provider that successfully delivered the restorative practice model that has enabled Leeds City Council to become a child-friendly city. The trainer previously worked with Nigel Richardson, the Director of Children's Services, when he was in Hull, where they tried to roll it out but less successfully. They developed it in Leeds with a grant from the Department for Education for over £3.5 million. That provider is very proven in the marketplace and we engaged them in July following a contract we did have with Sky, which we terminated at the start of the year because we did not feel they were able to deliver it so strongly. The Children's Services leadership team have completed the initial training. It is being rolled out to other members of the service now. Fostering and adoption have completed it. Children in need services have completed it. It is also being rolled out to our residential children's care staff. But also, most importantly, the department leadership team, so Susan and I, Mark Rogers and others in C.Y.P.E.S., are about to embark on it because the research, evidence and evaluation very clearly shows that for you to have a relationship-based approach to working in a strengths-based, rights-based way with children and families, it needs to start from the very top of the house.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Okay, thanks for that. So which of the services are accessing training? There was a time when systemic training was taking place. Is systemic training still in the mix?

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

So the systemic social work training has been completed by I think about 10 social workers and we are looking to work out how we use that as part of the way in which we are now developing our family and therapeutic services within the social care piece, but also the way in which the governance around trauma-informed working also sits alongside our C.A.M.H.S. colleagues. So systemic practice is absolutely part of the toolkit of services that we provide. Susan might be able to help, but in terms of my understanding now, there was never an intention for the whole of all social workers to be systemically trained but we want to make sure that we have that within the toolbox. We are also doing trauma-informed practice. We are going to be doing some therapeutic-informed social work training as well as other specific forms of training around therapeutic inputs for developmental trauma within our fostering and adoption services. So there is generic training as well as specific training as it is needed in different parts of the service, but certainly we can send you the details, Deputy. All members of the service in children's social care - so that is those that are responsible for child protection services - are accessing training and have been able to access it during COVID.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Thank you, Mark. Minister, can you provide an update on the take-up of the on-Island social worker training for the current academic year? How does this ... sorry.

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Sorry, I thought you had finished the question. Sorry if I was interrupting. So the on-Island social work training is I think going really well. I am particularly pleased with it. The first intake of 12 students ... no, sorry, the degree started last year and they are doing very well: 75 per cent of them for their first year got either a 2:1 or a first class and all of them passed, which is really good. Their attendance levels are above average for the U.K., and obviously with the disruption there has been to how people receive their learning that is certainly a good thing. I am just trying to look through my numbers. I think we had 11 sign up to go this year. Yes, that is right, 11 due to start for this year. The admissions process for that had already begun before everything got very strange with the lockdown measures, et cetera, so some of the admissions process had to swap to being online. I think we are also quite pleased that there seems to be quite a diverse bunch of people who are signing up for it, which can only be a good thing.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

You mentioned 11 this year. How does that compare numerically with the numbers that signed up for the first year?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

I think it was 12 last year, yes.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

So there has not been an appreciable fall away of interest?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

No, certainly not. It remains popular so that is a good thing.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Right, okay, yes. In its previous review of the Government Plan, the panel noted the need for a dedicated H.R. (human resources) post in the Children's Service. However, it required further information regarding the outcomes being achieved as a result of the funding. Have these outcomes been determined and, if so, what are the outcomes so far?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Sure. Mark, do you want to take that?

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

Thank you, Minister. Yes, Deputy. So, essentially, as also raised as the most important thing for children's social care by Ofsted under the auspices of the Care Commission's inspection in the summer, our greatest challenge is the recruitment of staff. Part of the answer to this is related to the next question that I know you want to ask in relation to the balance between permanent staff and agency staff. The main outcome is to enable us to have a more permanent workforce. That dedicated resource actually helped to recruit me in November, so we now have a much more permanent leadership team in the Children's Service. I met with a senior officer from the police this week and he was commenting on in his 9 years in the Island he has known 9 directors of the Children's Service. I am pleased to say that we are locking in much more permanency in the leadership team. In relation to the questions you are going to ask the Minister in a moment, without stealing his thunder, we are seeing an increase in the number of permanent staff and all areas other than the children in need teams we are seeing much greater stability in the workforce. So, that dedicated H.R. worker but also the work that we get from the H.R. partners from the centre of government is helping us to increase that stability.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Okay. This is really one from left field: what impact has COVID-19 had on being able to recruit people from other jurisdictions?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Well, the short answer to that is that it has been difficult. In terms of getting people to the Island, it has certainly been very difficult at points and in particular for having agency staff as well. That was very difficult, and in the early stages of lockdown a number of them took the decision to leave, quite understandably. Unfortunately, I guess that was probably inevitable.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Okay. We have talked previously about M.A.S.H. (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) and the shortfall in funding for M.A.S.H. What has been the impact of increased funding? Has it improved the service at all?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

So at the beginning of the pandemic we fast-tracked some of the changes that we knew we wanted to make anyway in changing what the front door for the service is and move away from that front door being purely about safeguarding to being about more than that, getting early help, getting advice and support in other ways. So in March we started the Children and Families Hub that we promoted to be that first point of contact to enable people to get advice and hopefully in some tricky situations might be able to take those first steps to nip things in the bud so that they do not escalate and do not require further interventions by other parts of the service or hopefully head off any

concerns that there might end up being about safeguarding. Susan can give some more of the numbers and things behind that, but there has been a take-up of that service. A lot of the contacts that are being made there are for signposting or a few words of advice, which is good and hopefully that then empowers the people who get in touch with it to be able to make those right decisions and help themselves, which can then alleviate other parts of the service acting to fix things rather than prevent things. I do not know if Susan wants to add just in terms of any of the breakdown of that sort of thing that is happening.

**Group Director, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Yes, we are seeing a steady increase. It was a little bit of a slow start when we started in March. We had brought it forward. We thought we would start the hub in September this year but it made absolute sense, given some of the concerns and our thoughts about family vulnerabilities during lockdown, to get that in place. So what we see is the front door at a much earlier stage for families. We know and I think we have talked at this Scrutiny Panel before that people did not really like the idea of being “M.A.S.H.ed” so we do not do that anymore. M.A.S.H. is further down the line for particular cases. We are seeing quite a lot of contact. Some weeks have been quieter than others, from 28 contacts to 72 contacts, and we imagine that that will grow as we go forward. It is very much one of our growth areas that we had outlined in last year’s first Government Plan, if you like, around children in need and early help. So at the moment we are in the process of just finalising some of the detail about exactly what staff we will have in there. We have brought a number of staff together under one head of service and we are seeing what we are describing as the triage when people contact us happening very quickly. Some of the feedback that we are getting is really positive, but the contacts are varying from week to week, which is not unexpected. That would have happened in M.A.S.H. as well. So it has been a really good start and I think that allows M.A.S.H. and the Children’s Service to concentrate on the children and families who have more complex circumstances or circumstances where they are experiencing significant harm or are at risk of that. So there is an ability for them to concentrate absolutely on that while we can pick up some of the early help.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Mark, did you want to add something to that?

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

Thank you, Deputy. Susan has actually just said it, so no, I do not need to, other than it is really important for the panel to appreciate that M.A.S.H. has now been subsumed into the Children and Families Hub and it is a discrete function as part of triage. M.A.S.H. now does not exist outside of the Children and Families Hub.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Right, okay. We are going to talk about children's rights now. I wondered if you could provide an update of the work of the children's rights team.

[10:30]

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Yes. This is an area of development that I am particularly pleased with. You will know it was a recommendation of the Care Inquiry to set up an in-house children's rights officer, and relatively soon after that there was an interim appointment made for one children's rights officer. Then at the beginning of this year her and her post were both made permanent and 2 extra children's rights officers have been employed in there, too. I, just as it happens, had my last catch-up with them yesterday, just as an informal opportunity to hear about some of the work they are doing with the young people that they are supporting. They are also involved in the Corporate Parenting Board. They are actively involved now with 48 care leavers. Just offhand, some of the feedback I occasionally get when I am speaking to people who have engaged with the service is some of those people are very pleased with that. So, we have moved on quite a bit from where we were a few years ago and I think we have a very good team, all permanently employed there with their own experiences and perspectives in this area that I think are proving to be very useful when it comes to building those relationships with those young people and building up some of the trust that is essential. So, I am very pleased with how that is developing.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Okay. You are obviously building your team. I am wondering whether you could tell us what the process is in terms of recruitment to ensure that the people you are recruiting have care experience and have worked with children at that level.

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

I do not know if that is a question specifically about the children's rights team or more broadly in the service, but I know it has been our intention, certainly since the Care Inquiry but also under Mark's leadership since he has taken over, to aspire to have the best people we possibly can in these roles, to the point of perhaps being a bit pickier than we might previously have been and wanting to shape our workforce based on what we know is our need here. So that has meant striking a balance between newly qualified social workers, which, let us be honest, the recruitment campaign has been successful at and that is a good thing because having younger people fresh out of their studies can be a good thing because they will be up to date on the academic side of things and provides some good opportunities for training for them as well, but also people who are more experienced. I am picking up from some of those members of staff who I am speaking to, sometimes just casually

speaking to them when I am around, I know that there are some who have had care experience themselves that has been something that has inspired them to want to join the service and play their part, some of those Jersey born as well so their care experience has been in Jersey. I think that feeling is filtering out because I am also encountering young people at the start of their studies who are now aspiring to be social workers because of the experience that they have had. That is a very pleasing bit of feedback to hear.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Thank you for that, Minister. In the 6-month progress report it states that the team has “freedom to roam”, working with children in care. Can you elaborate on what this means in terms of its workload?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

For the children’s rights officers, the point of that role is that it is one ... part of it is one way of the wider service being held to account. So, obviously we have external bodies that will hold us to account, whether that is through inspections or other advocacy groups, et cetera, but having an in-house service is an important layer in that, too. The children’s rights office leader has direct access and regular access to the Director-General for C.Y.P.E.S. to go straight there if there are any concerns or anything like that. I reiterated to them yesterday that if they felt that they needed extra help with a push in something that they can come straight to me as well. Mark Owers is offering to add some additional info to that if it helps.

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

Thank you, Minister. Deputy, that term “freedom to roam” is a term I use in respect of the children’s rights officers. While they are line managed within the Children’s Service, they are not line managed by any of those managers responsible for case management. So they sit in a part of the service which is called the insight and enablement service, and they sit alongside our independent reviewing officers. As part of the legislative transformation programme, we will be putting the role of the I.R.O. (independent reviewing officer) on a legislative footing towards the end of the year, which Andrew Heaven might want to comment on. But together they are responsible for providing internal grit in the system, if you like, and they are not shackled in any way by line management and association with case management decision making. So they provide an in-house check and balance, but that is also alongside the work that we commission from Jersey Cares as independent advocates who provide, if you like, the outside-in accountability to us, alongside, of course, the advocacy work we commission from Barnardo’s around child protection conferences, and also we have the role of the Children’s Commissioner also alongside the Care Commission, which also looks at the children’s rights impact work that we are doing. They are today publishing their first 2 inspections for the first time as our new regulator, which obviously started at the start of the year.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Can I ask a quick question regarding that? Sorry, Deputy Pointon?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Yes, do.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

With regards the inspections that you are talking about, or the reviews, these are internal reviews of services of Children's Services, and I see the number of people that you can address. Where does the Independent Children's Homes Association fit into that review process? Is that an overall review of children's homes, so to speak, that would feed into or be fed into by those other independent groups or is that a layer on top of? I am just trying to get some picture of where all of these things fit together so that you get an overall view of where we are.

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

That one in particular is not an inspection in the same way that we have had inspections from Ofsted, et cetera. It is a review of our volition, of our request for them to come in and look at that. I think they are towards the end stages of that. Mark, are you able to add to that?

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

Yes, I can, thank you, Minister. Deputy, the Care Commission are our regulator and they set the quality standards. As part of our registration as a children's home provider, we have to comply with those quality standards, or regulations if you like. We have to open ourselves up to inspection, so we have no choice, and we are held to account by that regulator, the Jersey Care Commission. They will and always committed as part of the establishment of that commission to publish those reports, the first of which I mentioned today. Within that ...

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Sorry, are they undertaken by the Care Commission then?

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

By the Care Commission, yes, so the regulator. At this time, the only part that we are formally regulated in is the children's homes. So all of our children's homes, our supported accommodation services, of which there are 2, and then the secure children's home, otherwise known as Greenfields, they are all regulated services as of the start of the year, a very important part of the recommendations of the Care Inquiry and a very important part of the way in which we are being held to account and having greater transparency in the quality of our services. Alongside that in relation to our children's homes, we have a monthly visit by an independent person who provides a

report to each of the registered managers. The report comes to the senior leadership team and a copy of that report is given to the Care Commission. Then, within that, I am responsible for what happens in the children's homes operationally and strategically. I made a decision to ask for expertise and independent advice objectivity from the Independent Children's Homes Association, specifically a member of that organisation who has a proven track record over a number of decades of delivering outstanding services as judged by Ofsted, both within the social care setting and within the health setting. So that person has again had the freedom to roam, to speak to young people who have experienced our children's homes, to speak to our staff, speak to our registered managers, and to speak to a range of stakeholders, including the chief inspector from the Care Commission, the Children's Commissioner and other organisations, including the Minister and the Director-General, Mark Rogers, to ask what they think works well about our provision at the moment and where we need to make improvements and why. What that is doing is enabling me and my management team to think about where we should direct our efforts to continue our improvement journey.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay, so the Independent Children's Homes Association is being used, if you like, as consultants to inform because of their knowledge of children's homes, am I right?

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

They are a membership organisation and they represent both not-for-profit and for-profit children's homes in England, so not local authority-run children's homes, but Ofsted very clearly say in their annual report that a higher percentage of the Independent Children's Homes Association members have been judged outstanding by Ofsted compared to local authorities. So I made a decision to ask an organisation that has members that deliver outstanding services in children's homes to provide us with advice and support on the basis that they are best in class.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Right, so it is not because of their experience in reviews or because they ... I do not think they have undertaken any reviews. We have had some questions about this as well so I thought it would be a good time to clear it up. It is because of their best practice that they are being used? There is a difference there, is there not? Because if one was being devil's advocate, some might say that perhaps sometimes Ofsted are not the best at reviews or are not the best at practice but they know how to undertake a review.

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

So there is a distinction here which - thank you - you are making, which is really important for the panel. Ofsted and the Jersey Care Commission are a regulator and they take quite a narrow view

in relation to the standards that have been documented which you have to meet in order to continue to be a registered regulated service. Whereas a review is much more wide-ranging and can obviously take as long as it wants, can have freer roam and can be freer in what they say because they are not bound just by what is written in the regulation. So the 2 things are very different, and while Ofsted are on a good journey, as the Association of Directors of Children's Services certainly in England would say, about being a force for good in relation to improvement, the regulator is not always the best organisation to help with improvement, merely just to make sure you are meeting the regulated standards, and there is a difference.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay. Sorry, I will not dwell too long on this because I know we have a lot. So what you are saying is that by using these other organisations you believe they can become drivers of improvements, not simply on maintaining standards, and that is what you are looking for them to do?

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

Yes. Now, we essentially have a basket of insights. We have information from our independent person. We have information from our children's rights team. We have information from experts in the field and, of course, we have information from the regulator. Then, of course, we have our own staff who want to do their very best. Collectively, I think that puts us in a very strong position to take our services forward and to continuously improve.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay. Are there other groups that could also provide that service in the U.K.? Because they do seem to be ... it is clear to me now that they are separate from Ofsted. They are not a regulator. It is more a sort of improvement group, is it not, is what you are saying? So are there other groups that you may use in the future as well if you find that they are as effective? Do they exist? I do not know, this is not my specialist topic, I will be honest.

[10:45]

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

The Independent Children's Homes Association represents more than half of the independent providers in ... I do not have the figure to hand but in England. So in terms of being able to draw on best practice, it is well placed as a network organisation. To put it in context, Jersey has long been a member of CoramBAAF, and that is the British Association of Adoption and Fostering. So as a standalone, insular service provider, we, of course, want to be able to be part of the learning and development of other providers delivering similar services. So the residential children's homes in the Island have not benefited previously from being part of a network and the Independent Children's

Homes Association is the only national network of children's homes providers, which is why we have been drawn to them.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay. Sorry, Deputy Pointon, had you finished your questioning?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

No, I still have question 14 to tackle.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay, carry on, sorry.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

The 6-month report also outlined problems you were having recruiting practice improvement officers. I wondered why you were having difficulty recruiting practice improvement officers.

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

It was not that we were having particular difficulties, but what we have done is developed the Insight and Enablement Service, which I referred to earlier, which has now got a principal social worker for children and families and they head that up. Within that service, we have brought together a quality assurance manager, and so that was a post that we had not appointed. We had identified 3 people through 3 separate rounds and unfortunately, they did not take up the post, so there was some delay in that and there was some difficulty there. We have since appointed a new quality assurance manager and they are just serving their notice in another Government department. I am absolutely delighted with that appointment; the person is very well regarded across government for helping to handle complaints and feedback. Of course, that is something we need to improve as we seek to have greater transparency around our quality assurance and the way in which we are learning from feedback, but also being very clear where we know that we have not done things that we should have done. There is another post, which we are just having a job evaluation around, in relation to a training and development manager to help complete that continuous learning cycle. Just this week, we have been relaunching our quality assurance framework and so within that we are making quality improvement and quality assurance everybody's business. So that is 200 staff approximately being inducted into the way in which that quality assurance framework makes a difference for children and families.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

I see that you had funding for staff recruitment to the tune of about £134,000 for 2020. How has this been spent on commissioning services or have you been able to spend that money on recruitment?

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

We have been able to spend some of that money on the quality assurance manager. We have been able to spend it on quality assurance activities and some quality assurance development work. It will also be put against the new quality assurance officers posts once they are in place, which I expect to be in the next couple of weeks.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

We are close to the end of the year. Are you going to get all that money spent?

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

Some of it in the round will probably have been able to contribute towards the restorative practice we talked about earlier, which is going to be a bedrock in the way in which we are developing quality services. So I will not be able to answer that question until the outturn of the end of the year in terms of the way in which my budget finishes.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

I was going to say, when you get to the end of the year and you have not spent it all, will that be considered an efficiency saving?

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

That is a very good question, Deputy, and of course the way in which we are looking at efficiencies and savings and investment in relation to our COVID experiences are a very live issue for Government officials. I have to say that the Children's Services budget will have an underspend at the end of the year, which we will give up, but that is not because we are not trying to use that money effectively. We have a healthy-looking budget for next year, which will absolutely be around driving up quality and focused on quality improvement. It has been difficult to spend the money but we are still making improvements in spite of that. So we do not have financial challenges in the service at the moment.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Thank you. I will hand you over to Deputy Doublet.

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

Can I just follow up on the post and I think, Mark, you said that there were 3 people that interviewed and did not take up the post. Did I hear that correctly?

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

Yes, you did, the quality assurance manager post that is, yes.

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

What were the reasons why people did not take the posts when they were offered to them?

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

More than anything, they were COVID related. So one of them who was an outstanding candidate had been told by their agency that they could do it from England and I was very clear they could not, it is too important a role for us for them to do that remotely. Then another person again who was an outstanding candidate accepted the post, was coming on-Island, and then had some personal issues that they needed to prioritise. The third person thankfully is also outstanding and she is very much embedding herself into the service, she is loving living in Jersey, and while it is an agency post at the moment she is clearly committed to our service and the Island.

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

What was the gender of the first 2 people you just talked about?

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

I think all 3 of them were females. I would need to confirm that but I'm 95 per cent sure they were all female.

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

The reason why I am reflecting on gender is because there are some linked issues, the link with the gender pay gap review, which looked at this. So that is why I was reflecting on that.

**Director of Safeguarding and Care:**

Just to say, the post is well remunerated and it is a female in that post, compared to other posts, which may be taken up by men as well.

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

I will move on now to the children's policy and legislative programme. From the 6-month progress report that we were pleased to receive, thank you, we note that a number of policy officers were redeployed throughout the COVID emergency and this has had an impact on the ability to bring forward the legislation as it was planned. Can we talk about the U.N.C.R.C. (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) legislation, please, to indirectly incorporate the U.N.C.R.C.? That is expected to be lodged in quarter one 2021. Is that still the expectation and, if so, when could the panel expect to see a draft of this, please?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Yes, that is still the expectation to lodge that in the first quarter of next year. I am clear that I think that is a really important piece of work and it needs to be progressed in a timely way, so bear in mind the next election. Because, whoever ends up in the next Government and the next Assembly needs to start the job knowing exactly what the terms are and how things like children's rights impact assessments will be required and all of that. I do not want to risk further delay so they end up in a job and then those become new requirements 6 months down the line, or whatever, which I think would be a bad thing. I cannot give you a date exactly for when we can give you a version of that, but it is such an important piece of work I would be very keen for you to have sight of that as soon as possible. Because this is an area that will affect all parts of our Government, all departments, and how Scrutiny and the wider States Assembly will have to work as well. Your perspective on that will be invaluable. So I would undertake to get that to you as soon as practicable.

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

Do you think all Government departments and Ministers are prepared for this?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Now that is a good question. I do not know, is the honest answer. I think there has been very good engagement. Most people who I speak to are genuinely invested in this project and believe it is the right thing to do. But I would be lying if I said there were not people who might be apprehensive about it. It is going to be a different way of doing things. The discussions when we spoke in Government about indirect incorporation versus direct incorporation were quite interesting discussions because of the different ramifications they may have. Of course, today we have had the publication of the legislative gap analysis, which highlights lots of areas where we need improvement. It may well be the case that some look at that and find it daunting and I understand why they might feel like that. Personally, I think it is a riveting challenge for us to get on with and use this as an opportunity to address it. So it is possible that there will be some areas that will find it a shock to the system, but we are giving them plenty of notice. The culture change is on its way and when that happens it will obviously be a thoroughly good thing for the Island. There are some pilots that are going on in the meantime with children's rights impact assessments. Some of that has been difficult throughout the COVID period. But there was one for children returning to school. The Island Plan, they have been considering that in part of that process. They are not even legally required to do so now, but are choosing to do so because they know it is going to be a requirement, so they may as well get with it as soon as possible.

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

In terms of you said there may be some Ministers or departments that are apprehensive about this, what do you see as being the risks in terms of any Ministers or Government departments that are not ready?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Do you mean political risks to getting this project over the line or risks once it is in force?

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

Both.

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

The political risks will be mitigated by the work that we have done and will do over this. That is partly why I am keen for Scrutiny to get your eyes on it, because if you spot things that we have missed or things that did not occur to us and can raise that, then that can only strengthen the projects and provide a greater buy-in to it. I do not think that there are political risks to worry about in the meantime, especially since we are doing a 2-step approach, going for indirect incorporation and then considering what we could do for direct incorporation, rather than going straight to that and some of the ramifications that could potentially have. So I think that has mitigated that. In terms of when it is in force and how departments cope with it, there will inevitably be risks associated with any change that puts requirements on Ministers, officers and people who work in those departments, to do something that will be different to what they have done before. Who knows, maybe in the course of doing this we might encounter the occasional example where a department just does not do something properly, in which case we will have to involve ourselves and try to deal with that. But some of the ways that we are trying to pre-empt that are with the officers who are leading on this, one of whom is in this hearing, and there is another officer who is doing really good work, who are working with those other departments to say: "Right, this is what it will look like and if you need any help or any questions", they are there on board and more than capable of helping them to deal with that. So it is just that sort of thing we have to do to mitigate any potential risks.

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

You mentioned that the culture change in this area is on its way. I find that interesting given that it has been 3 years since my original proposition, which the aim was to affect that culture change. Is it fair to say that is something that has been a struggle to affect that culture change? Will the culture change follow the legislation in this area or are you expecting the culture change to come before the legislation?

[11:00]

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

We need to aspire to have as much of it done before the legislation as possible. That is why I am really pleased with the work with the Island Plan because that is showing a proactive approach to it, which is really good. When you make something a legal requirement, whatever that is, it inevitably forces culture change. The example I always give is my late grandmother never wore a seatbelt in a car until the day it became illegal for her to not do so. Then obviously she always did it. Law can force a culture change, whether people like it or not. So, if there are still people or parts of departments that have not got the memo by then, they will just have to get it very quickly and we will provide what proactive support we can to assist with that. But they will just have to. There has been some good stuff in the meantime to help develop that beforehand in terms of getting people from all parts of Government considering these issues. We had a fantastic event, I cannot remember whether it was the beginning of this year or end of last year, where we had the main hall at the Radisson Hotel absolutely packed with officers and civil servants hearing directly from people with care experience. They were basically telling them their life story and trying to help people understand this is why it is important, because it is about human beings, it is about people, their lives and their experiences, rather than a few bullet points on a sheet of paper or whatever. So culture change is going to be difficult and will we have achieved it in time for the legislation? No, we will not, there will still be people who have to get it. But this will help ingrain it in our D.N.A. (deoxyribonucleic acid) and then in years to come it will just be a thing you automatically do; it will just be second nature.

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

You mentioned about people sharing stories. Can you elaborate on what involvement children and young people have had or are having in the development of these changes?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Some of the direct engagement with politicians or with Ministers has been difficult through COVID, just from physically not being able to speak to them, which I find is the most powerful way of doing it just because that human interaction is really important. We have had some really good opportunities before that, though, of Ministers, not just myself but other ones, going out to speak to children and talk to them about their understanding of children's rights and what that means and how they think it applies to them and what their priorities will be from it. The Chairman of this panel will be pleased that often when I speak to particularly young children they are really interested in safe paths to school and transport; cycling, and buses as well have come up quite a few times in those conversations. The Children's Commissioner as well, of course, has played a really important role in assisting us with this. Is Andrew still on the line? I do not know if he has anything to add to that.

**Director of Children’s Policy:**

Yes, I was listening, Minister. Just in terms of what was being said, in terms of what we are trying to do here in relation to bringing in indirect incorporation is a system-wide change. Just before COVID, we did quite a number of focus groups with regard officers and also politicians talking about what would they need in terms of being able to move into this new world of indirect incorporation. We have some recommendations from that report, which will prove to be quite helpful for us going forward in terms of preparing how we implement the Regulations. That was one thing. The other thing I was going to say, Deputy, was when, as officers and working with Ministers, as we are submitting our impact assessments, the role of the Children’s Commissioner becomes very important because she will have oversight of all of these assessments and will have a strong voice in terms of assessing and describing their quality, so it does not become a tick-box exercise. All of which brings me back to the last point that the Minister and yourself were discussing was around children’s involvement, because it is crucial. It is like a golden thread that runs through all of this, is that even in these times, these kinds of Teams type meetings, it is really important to think carefully about how we can engage and involve, in a meaningful way, children’s experience and children’s voice. Because that, as the Minister says, is what this is all about in terms of improving their outcomes. I would just add that to the Minister’s response.

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

Just keeping on that theme of children’s involvement and making sure that the voice of children is captured in any consultation, with the omnibus amendment to the Children’s Law and also your consultation on plans to regulate social work and mental health services, how are you capturing the voice of the child in those 2 pieces of work?

**Director of Children’s Policy:**

Minister, would you like me to respond on that?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Yes, please.

**Director of Children’s Policy:**

In terms of the omnibus amendment and the indirect incorporation law, those 2 pieces of public consultation, there were a number of different things that officers did to engage children and young people. So we used the school councils network, for want of a better word. We also had a drop-in in the library, so we made ourselves available in that sense. We also engaged the voluntary sector, who had a remit around children, some of the ways that we tried to reach out and tried to capture the voice of children. It is easy to talk about engaging children and young people; it is quite a challenge to do it meaningfully. Every time we do it, certainly from a policy perspective, I would like

to think that we get a bit more experience and a bit better at it. But in terms of those 2 pieces of work that is kind of how we engaged with children and young people. We also put the consultation on to the website as is, but we realised that type of approach will only yield a certain number of responses, usually from enthusiasts and particular stakeholders. So we worked hard in trying to get those voices.

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

Deputy Ward, are you chipping in with a question? I can see your camera on.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

No, I am just conscious of the time.

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

I thought it might be timing, yes, I will try to move on. Could we just very briefly hear from the Minister on the omnibus amendment to the Children's Law and when the panel might see a draft of that please, just briefly?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Again, I will undertake to get that to scrutiny as soon as possible. Looking to lodge in the first quarter of next year as well. I do not know if Andrew can update on when that might be.

**Director of Children's Policy:**

Yes, no problem, Minister. We have received our first set of drafts back from the law drafter and we are working on that now. I absolutely will be supporting the Minister to share that when we have got it into a fashion that would be meaningful to share. But certainly when we have done work in this area before, the Scrutiny Panel having eyes on it being able to feed back has been extremely helpful and something that I would look forward to.

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

Could I just ask about the timescale for your work on regulating social work and mental health services? I believe that the consultation is taking place in quarter 4, 2020. Could I just have the dates for when that consultation is expected to conclude and when the legislation is proposed to be lodged, Minister, please?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

That is for lodging next year. It will not be me who lodges that. That will be the Minister for the Environment. So some of those questions and commitments might be better to be sought directly

from him. That is looking for debate next year. The public consultation, what I have in front of me, is due to begin in the final quarter of this year.

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

Why is it the Minister for the Environment?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Yes, good question. Do you remember during the States sittings at Fort Regent there were some of the emergency pieces that had to be done on Regulation, including for care homes, was done by Deputy Guida as Assistant Minister? I am not entirely sure why that is the case but it is the case. I do not know if Andrew knows why.

**Director of Children's Policy:**

So just in terms of the first query, yes, I understand we would look to consult on the draft law for the mental health service and the social service regulations ahead of debate in the first quarter of next year. Minister, I think the reason why it has gone to that elected Member is potentially because the law that is being developed is for independent inspection. Given that the law that is being drafted is potentially going to touch on Children's Services, there is a potential conflict. I think that would be the explanation that I would offer.

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

In terms of one element of the children's legislative transformation programme, there is some work being done in relation to parental responsibility orders, I understand. Could you update the panel on this work, please, and especially in relation to same-sex couples?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Deputy, it was just the subject that you emailed me about the other day, there was a response from the policy lead on that. I cannot remember exactly what it said but I seem to recall that it was in hand, if I remember rightly. I can doublecheck that for you offline and get back to you if that is helpful.

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

Perhaps you could give us an answer at the end of the hearing if your officer could send you the information in the meantime. I would be grateful if you could share that with the public during the hearing, thank you. I just have one more brief question on the legislation related to children and this is words from a presentation: "In terms of preventing future unmet well-being needs, arguably the most important thing we can do in terms of legislation for children is to ensure they have got time to develop a secure attachment with their caregivers." Do you agree, Minister, that legislation is

needed to enable longer periods of paid parental leave and how are you working towards this with your ministerial colleagues?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

When it comes to paid parental leave, I am absolutely confident that other Ministers can confirm that I am a thorn in their side over this. It is something I have a long-held position on that we ought to go further than we currently do in securing rights for, not just parents, but people in other caring roles as well, to have that right. This is something that was in the legislative gap analysis today pointing out that there are some who are not covered by the legislation, so with that having been drawn to my attention I will raise that at a subsequent point now that it is in this report. But it is the case that when it has come to subjects like paid parental leave, access to primary care and the cost of that for young children, I have been a thorn in the side of other Ministers as I have wanted to progress very quickly.

[11:15]

Because, when it comes to those financial issues, you cannot underestimate the impact that has on those families, and therefore those children as well, in decisions that families make, where, were they helped with the financial side of it, they would be empowered to make those decisions differently and to be able to do what is best for their children. We are a wealthy Island at the end of the day and where the issue is the money, I think we ought to be much quicker on that. But then, of course, there is policy stationed alongside it that can take longer but, yes, so I am a thorn in their side.

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

Thank you.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I will continue with some questions regards Children's Services. Minister, in early September a number of signs were placed up around town by a group dissatisfied with the manner in which Children's Services continues to operate. What is your response to that?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Generally, I am a supporter of the right of people to take part in the democratic process and I do not disparage people for undertaking peaceful action to highlight a cause that is important to them. So, for people to feel strongly and want to do that, then absolutely they go ahead with that. But what matters more is what we do afterwards, how we consider issues that are raised, some of which we might have a lot of sympathy with, some of which we might think there is a bit more to it than just the public face of a protest. So I know that there are people who were involved in that who have got

concerns or difficulties with certain things that are going on, complaints in particular and how those are handled. So some of these people we have met and discussed, and that has not just been with me present there, but also with Mark Owers there as well. We have some thinking to do in how we progress some of the issues that they have raised. So, yes, I think that is my initial response to that.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I was going to ask you how you are engaging with the group to genuinely understand their concerns. Have you met with individuals or representatives perhaps of the group themselves in order to understand? When someone takes that step to protest, it is not an easy step to take.

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

I have not met directly with them since that protest took place. I have met on a few occasions with some of them before and had some really good discussions, which is helpful. I get a lot of communications from people who are dissatisfied with the service that they receive. The difficult nature of this sort of work is that unfortunately, even when things are done objectively perfectly, there may well still be people who are very upset because unfortunately sometimes necessary decisions can be hard decisions and upsetting decisions and people can understandably feel aggrieved by that. But it does not always mean that there has been an injustice or that a wrong decision was made. Sometimes that requires us to have a look and conclude that in some of these instances the right decision has been made. Then we have to stand firm on that, if it is in the best interests of the child that is at the centre of it all.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

The panel has received anecdotal reports of situations where parents have wanted to record meetings with social workers. First, I suppose, is that the case? Second, they have been prevented from doing so in the reports we have heard. Why do you think parents are requesting to do that? I think it is important for us as a panel to understand that situation.

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

I know that there have been meetings that have been recorded. I know that is the case. Why people feel the need to do it, there will be people who, for whatever reason, want to be absolutely sure that, when a meeting takes place, they have the most accurate record you can possibly have of a meeting, and that is a recording of it. Because they might be worried about what consequences there might be from engagement with the services. I would be surprised, perfectly honestly, if there was a Children's Service across any part of the country where there were not people who engage with it who end up taking recordings. Partly that is just the nature of this work that sometimes difficult decisions have to be made and sometimes those will be decisions that will upset people significantly and they will be scared about the prospect of those decisions and so will feel they want to do this.

But ultimately, we do want to be in a position where those sorts of interventions are as rare as possible because we want to be proactive in supporting people in the early stages of whatever issues they might be facing. One day we want to be in a position where, when families themselves have concerns, they approach the Children's Service to get help because they have confidence that is the right place to go where they will get that help. There is a journey towards getting to that and there will be people who, for sometimes perfectly understandable reasons, will have grievances against the service because of what has happened to them. Rebuilding that trust can often be difficult and in some cases, unfortunately, impossible. We just have to try to provide as robust a service as we possibly can to get right decisions made for families and in particular those young people. Sometimes that might be difficult.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I am conscious that we have a few other really important things to ask as well. Deputy Pointon, do you want to ask a couple of questions regards the Care Memorial?

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Please can you provide an update on the progress of the Care Memorial project and when do you expect this project to be complete?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Yes, so there is an exhibition going on next week. I do not know if the invitations have gone out to that yet, but I undertook early on in this process, given the sensitive nature of it, that when things were progressed there would be an opportunity for public feedback. So there will be an opportunity next week for people to go and see what the Citizens Panel themselves have shortlisted as options for a memorial that they think may have some traction. Then, from there, we can look at that feedback and decide what the best way to progress it is. I am trying to find my notes just to get the exact timetable.

**Director of Children's Policy:**

Do you want me to help, Minister? So as you referred to, there is an exhibition of the 3 shortlisted candidates between 8th and 10th October at the Private and Public Gallery in St. Helier. Then, after that, there will be a further shortlisting and decision-making with interviews being held on 7th and 8th November with a view to announcing a final winner, I guess is the right word, a final candidate shortly after that in early December. Then, once we have gone through that process, we get to the point of the time taken to physically install it and what have you. But those are the headlines in terms of the process, Minister.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Funding for the Citizens Panel was due to conclude at the end of this year, as per the previous Government Plan. The Care Review Panel recommended in its review of the Government Plan that the future of the Citizens Panel should be clarified by quarter 3, 2020. What is the position with regards funding at this point in time?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Andrew?

**Director of Children's Policy:**

So we have, to clarify, the Citizens Panel is scheduled and funded to continue to meet until the end of the year. It is focused on its delivering and supporting officers to deliver on each of its recommendations. While there was a pause during the height of COVID, we are, just like every other part of life it seems, even at a panel level we are learning to work through internet and Teams and all sorts of different ways, and the panel will be writing a final report at the end of the year, which will have clear recommendations as to what has been done and what is to continue to be done in the next year or so. So the funding is there until the end of the year and the panel is focused on delivering on its recommendations in that timeframe.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Chair, do you want to take note of Deputy Doublet's ...

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Yes, we have a number of questions, so I think what we are going to do is we will put the questions to you that we want numerical answers to and then you can get some of those done, because I am conscious we have about 5 minutes of the allocated time left. Deputy Doublet, do you want to ask any of those questions that you are due to in the question plan now?

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

Yes, so if we could have really brief answers and then we might follow up in another way after. Could we just have the current waiting time for someone to access C.A.M.H.S.?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

I am just trying to find it on my list. Susan, I do not know if you have that in front of you?

**Group Director, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Yes, Minister, the average wait from referral to first appointment in 2020, and this is to the end of August, is 6 weeks.

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

Is that just for an initial consultation or is that to access treatment?

**Group Director, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

That is to assessment. Treatment is longer, it is significantly longer, Deputy.

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

What is the time for treatment, please?

**Group Director, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

It varies and it can vary depending on need, so it would be very quick if somebody is urgent, but it can be a number of months. I think just now it is, for some people, for family therapy for instance, it can be 9 to 12 months and up to 6 months for some other treatments. But things are triaged, so some people will get something quicker, some people longer. That is why we are working hard to improve the service.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Sorry, Deputy, can I just ask to add to that, what type of numbers are we talking about that are waiting for referrals, are we talking in the tens, in the twenties, in the hundreds? Do you have that sort of data, just so we get context?

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

Do you mean waiting for assessment?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Yes, I do, or even for assessment.

**Group Director, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

I do not have the number on the waiting list just now but what I would want to assure the panel is that I referred earlier to the business case and the investment we have post-COVID, so we have got new staff in to try to attack that waiting list and get people through with their initial assessments and then move them on for treatment. I am sorry, I do not have the waiting list figure.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

If we could have the numbers at some point, it gives us a context of where we are; that is all.

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

That is okay. I think we should move on from those because we can follow up in another way on the rest of those questions and go to the general ones.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Absolutely. Can I just ask - it is a question Deputy Doublet asked - how many children's rights impact assessments have been carried out in relation to COVID-19 specific legislation that has been passed?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

A specific number, I do not know. I do not know if Andrew knows that off hand?

**Director of Children's Policy:**

So the only C.R.E.A. (children's rights impact assessment) that has been completed in relation to COVID is the return to schools.

[11:30]

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Are there any areas of COVID-19 policy that are under development and how would they impact on children and young people? I also want to ask one other question that came from a hearing yesterday, and I think the rest of the panel know what I want to talk about. Any COVID-19 specifics that have an impact on young people in development now?

**Director of Children's Policy:**

As I sit here, I am not aware of any. But I know that there is an ambition, as the Minister has said earlier in this session, to try to pilot C.R.E.A. in various aspects of policy. But, at this moment in time, I do not have a list, I am not aware of a list, of any children's rights impact assessments ...

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Could I mention 2 areas? Sorry, Louise, go on.

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

Yes, I just wanted to ask the Minister if he agrees with me that we should be doing C.R.E.A. on every COVID policy change that is coming forward? We should have been doing them on any COVID legislation that has already come through, but we should certainly be doing them now that the C.R.E.A. system is ready for use.

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

I certainly agree in principle that ought to be our aspiration, but I have to freely offer the point that a lot of the work that we have done in the last few months has been very, very far from ideal. There have been very uncomfortable moments throughout this where process was absolutely not close to what I would have wanted it to be. I hope with things hopefully being calmer now then we might be in a position to start encouraging that and pushing for that. But I have to freely say that in this process it has been very, very difficult and things have sometimes not been carried out in a way that ideally, I would have liked them to have been done. But, given the exceptional circumstances, we have just had to plough on and deal with what we have got.

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

Are you pressing for that to happen in the future, though, with future policy?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

My ultimate intention is to make it a legal requirement, so we have to do that. Going into a Council of Ministers meeting and saying: "I am making it a legal requirement next year but even before then I want to make you do it", is a very, very difficult thing to do, especially when they all have great difficulties in managing a workload on something so unexpected and so difficult to deal with. So I would encourage everyone, where they are able to do it, to do it. But I am not going to be surprised if there are instances where it is just not possible to do that because of timelines or because of difficult other circumstances.

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

Sorry to press on this, but do you not agree that, given that many of the COVID policies and legislation restrict people's rights and liberties, is it not critical that a C.R.E.A. is carried out to ensure that children's rights, which are different to adults, are not being unfairly infringed?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

In principle, yes, I do. But we are not in the place that I would like us to be to be able to do that, so I am not particularly happy about saying that; it is just a reality I have had to put up with that there is not going to be, and has not been, an in-depth children's rights impact assessment on every single bit that, in an ideal world, I would have liked there to have been. What we can do is we can just try to make the best out of that situation that we can. There have been difficult moments in that where bits and pieces have proceeded in a way that was not particularly ideal and we have had to, in some instances, backtrack and in some instances have to hold our hands up and say: "Okay, this was not great, but it occurred because things were hectic and difficult", and just try to make the best out of that. So, in principle, yes, I would like it for everything. But these are very unusual times and that means it is difficult to get everything done in an ideal way.

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

So we have not been putting children first during the COVID emergency is what you are saying?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

No, I am saying the precise opposite. I am saying that we have faced a situation for our Island that has been unpredictable and a level that we have never seen before and had to undertake work that frankly has been incredible in the amount of man hours and the amount of time and effort that has gone into some of these things. With all things considered, I think we have done an incredibly good job at protecting people. If we had done nothing or done things differently it would have been substantially worse. I accept that at no point in any of that was anything we were ever going to do be perfect, but as far as I am concerned our mission of protecting the public of Jersey, and in particular protecting children and the future that they will have on this Island, has been good, broadly speaking. One or 2 bits and pieces I have disagreed with along the way, but when you face such an extreme circumstance the way at which you apply your values is different to how you would do it had things not been the case. Had none of this happened we would be even further down the line in some of the legislative requirements that I am wanting to bring forward. So it is just where we are, but I would disagree with the idea that we have not been putting children first, it is just our application of that principle has had to be within the context of a pandemic, which forces us to work very, very differently. I admit that not all of that was ideal and some of that were mistakes that I hold my hand up and say that should not have happened. But it has been difficult.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Can I finish with just one simple question, because we are running over time? Could I ask the Minister whether perhaps an ideal opportunity for a children's impact assessment is on the tasers legislation that is coming to the Assembly? Given that in the hearing yesterday we were told you can never say never when we asked about whether tasers will be used on children, so could I ask the Minister whether he would recommend that impact assessment is undertaken?

**The Minister for Children and Housing:**

Let me upset my fellow ministerial colleague and say that, yes, I think you should say never. I voted against the introduction of tasers into our peaceful Island in the first instance and I will not support the expansion of their use. I have spoken with the Children's Commissioner, who I know has grave concerns about this, and, yes, I certainly will go out from this meeting and say I would like a children's rights impact assessment done on this particular piece. I do not know how that would fit into the work of that department because it is not my department that does every children's rights impact assessment, it is the departments themselves that will do it. But I will speak to my 2 officers and ask if they can perhaps go and have a word with the officers behind that and see if they can assist

them with that. But I think that would be a good idea, although in what I have just said I have presupposed what the outcome of that might be.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Louise, do you mean the law drafting instructions to enable same-sex couples have both names on the birth certificate has been returned to the lead policy officer and will be circulated to the Minister by the end of October so we have a date for that legislation?

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

Yes.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I have read it out. With that, unless there is anything else that people want to add, we are over time and we have another hearing coming up, so I will say thank you very much, Minister, for your time, and thank you to the officers and thank you to the panel. Unless there is anything anyone wants to add in the final moments, then I will say thank you very much and I will call the hearing to an end.

[11:36]