



# Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny

## Panel

### Quarterly Hearing

## Witness: The Minister for Children and Education

Friday, 4th February 2022

**Panel:**

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

Senator T.A. Vallois

**Witnesses:**

Deputy S.M. Wickenden of St. Helier, The Minister for Children and Education

Deputy T. Pointon of St. John, Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1)

Connétable R. Vibert of St. Peter, Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2)

Mr. R. Sainsbury, Acting Director General, C.Y.P.E.S.

Mr. M. Owers, Director of Safeguarding and Chief Social Worker

Mr. A. Heaven, Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance

Ms. K. Roberts, Senior Policy Officer

Ms. S. Devlin, Group Director, Integrated Services and Commissioning

[10:01]

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

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the quarterly hearing with the Minister for Children and Education with the remit for children. We will start with introductions. My name is Deputy Rob Ward and I chair the panel.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

Senator Tracey Vallois, member of the panel.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Good morning, everyone. Deputy Scott Wickenden, I am the Minister for Children and Education.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (1):**

Good morning. I am Trevor Pointon, the Deputy of St. John, and I am Assistant Minister for Children and Education.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education (2):**

Constable Richard Vibert, Assistant Minister for Children and Education.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Do any officers want to introduce themselves now or they can do so if they come to speak? Let us do that. If an officer speaks they can introduce themselves, as they do, for the record because we are having a few problems with people getting in, I think. Let us get started. Minister, in terms of the response to the Government Plan, in your response to the panel's review of the Government Plan you explained that the increased number of family support workers is one of the reasons for the removal of a social worker post. Can you explain what the average caseload for a family support worker is at present?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Our average case work is no greater than 13 children per family support worker. That is the target we are aiming at and that is where we are at the moment. Obviously it will vary between worker but no more than 13 children per case worker.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Do you know if ever support workers are working at capacity or is there a large range in the numbers of cases that that they have? I know we have heard of a lot of support needed, particularly after COVID.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I am not aware directly of that. I know that Mark Owers is having trouble getting into the Scrutiny.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay, perhaps we can come back.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Maybe we can come back when he gets in, hopefully.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Can I just ask you to outline the difference in the roles between the social worker post and the family support worker that seem to be replacing the posts of social worker, to some extent?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

The family support workers is more ... Mark Owers is back in. Maybe I can ask Mark ... no, he is messaging. Family support workers is more about providing the access for the whole family where the social worker would be more on a one to one, I believe.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

So it is not a level of expertise or anything?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

It is very operationally in that one. For me, we need to make sure that we have these positions in place and that hopefully we are recruiting to it.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

While you are there you can perhaps let us know how many support workers there are.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

We have 17 family support workers, 2 senior family support workers.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

So is that 19 in total or a total of 17 with 2 of them being senior?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Nineteen. There is also a social work team manager, so we are running on that team at 20.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

That is a social worker, and that is 20. How many were there before the Government Plan? How many have been added with the removal of the social worker post? We are just trying to get a picture of the ratio of how many support workers make up a social worker, I suppose.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I see that Mark Owers is listening in. I am having a real problem where 2 of my most senior people cannot get into this meeting and they would have the detail to answer those questions. Hopefully

they are listening in. I am wondering if, Mark Owers, if you can hear us, if you can put it in chat and I will say it out loud. Is that okay, Chair?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

An answer is necessary. I will ask the next bit anyway and answer what we can. The panel identified a number of roles be recruited in relation to early help service. You explained in your response that 76 per cent of these roles have now been recruited to. Which roles are still outstanding in terms of the early help service, so we can move into a different area for you?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

There is a lot of information I have in front of me to help out and I do not have which specific roles are ... I know that the new structure has 42 posts, there are 24 vacancies, and we are going through 5 rounds of recruitment at the moment.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

You cannot tell us which are ...

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Again, if we go back, and I am hoping that everyone is still just desperately trying to get in that has the actual specific details at an operational level.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Do you know the timescale for recruiting those posts?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

In April 2022 we have a further 8 staff joining us and we are continuing into 2 recruits. So we have got 8 more staff. In February 2022, which is this month, the number of posts filled has increased from 18 to 30 and a further 8 staff are joining by April. Then we are continuing to recruit at the moment.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I think we will come back to the ...

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Sorry, about this, Chair.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

That is okay. Senator Vallois, do you want to ask the questions about the accountability performance framework, which we were going to ask?

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

It is noted that an outcome-based accountability performance framework is under development to consider activity; quantity: how much; quality: how well; and impact: is anyone better off? Are you able to outline at this point in time how this framework will operate in practice once it has been developed?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I will do my best. It is an operational level. It says development of the early health workflow, which is doing the O.B.A. (outcomes-based assessment), is on the Mosaic, the information system. Again it is very operational on how ... sorry, the director general, can you just introduce yourself if you are going to talk please?

**Acting Director General, C.Y.P.E.S.:**

Sorry, Minister, I am not able to raise my hand for some reason on the machine.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

There is not a raising hand capacity on the live broadcast. Sorry, introduce yourself so people know, that would be useful.

**Acting Director General, C.Y.P.E.S.:**

It is Rob Sainsbury, the acting director for C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills). I just wanted to pick up on the outcomes framework. That is something that I am working with the directors on and our new informatics lead to develop, in effect. That is mainly because we have good data in relation to our activity, so we can see volumes of people that are going through our services, but we really need to start getting better understanding of what is happening to people coming through our services, what difference are our services making around safeguarding, early intervention, prevention of escalating concerns, and particularly around the intensive youth support service. We are working through a way of not just measuring quantitative activity, of getting into understanding cases, because some of the numbers are able to be deep-dived into, to understand what difference is the service making for this young person. That is what we want to bring into that quality framework, which focuses on outcome rather than just activity.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

That is really helpful. To ensure that you are identifying that quality in terms of outcome-based accountability, how will you ensure that the staff are sufficiently trained around this framework?

**Acting Director General, C.Y.P.E.S.:**

Our group directors are working with their teams. It particularly affects Mark Owers' services across children and social care but also Susan's work within child and adolescent mental health. We are setting very clear expectations for the staff in the practice framework. Both Mark and Susan have been working with the teams on the specification of the service and what we need to deliver in our services, particularly in the new developed services. The outputs then from each practitioner will come through to a different governance arrangement where we can understand how we are delivering. That is about holding ourselves to account, holding others to account, making sure partners are doing their bit, so we are able to get to the nub of the problem. I think at times we can tell what the problem is but we are not always able to interpret into focused action. That is what we are working with our practitioners on. Only yesterday I think we had over 50 of our social work staff who went through our new approach to our practice-based approach. It is a strengths-based stance that we have that Mark and Sue have created. It is trauma informed and it is a child-first approach, so it is all in good researched evidence. We need to quantify this in a different way.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

That is very helpful. In terms of a follow-up to that, how will it link, if it does at all, to the new Children and Young People Law that has been lodged?

**Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:**

With your permission, Minister, I can help.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

If you can introduce yourself, Andrew.

**Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:**

Yes, of course. My name is Andrew Heaven and I am head of policy. I work in Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance, which is one part of the Government. My portfolio of policy area is around children. Just answering the question about how Rob's just described, how that fits in with the new law, there is a part in the new Children and Young People Law that talks about a strategic plan and it talks about the requirement for the Minister to bring forward a strategic plan. What we are doing at the moment outside of the law is we have constructed a children and young people's plan and we have used the very same outcomes-based accountability approach to hold us accountable for indicators and outcomes across a range of different areas. For example - you will be familiar with this - learn and achieve, being healthy, health and well-being, and being safe.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Can I ask a quick question? That is quite interesting that link because one of the things around the children's law we asked was there is stuff about plans for children but we were very cautious about those going into action and the action that comes from those plans. Are you saying that this accountability framework will link to those actual tangible outcomes from those specific plans for children as well? So this is one of the checks and balances in place to ensure that plans are not just plans, which is the concern that we had.

**Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:**

There is potential. I was responding in terms of the law and the children and young people strategic plan is and is meant to be the Government's overarching strategy for children. Now the approach that we are talking about here in terms of measurement is outcomes-based accountability and you can use that method and approach all the way down through services into and measuring how different services are performing, for want of a better word, and using those metrics.

[10:15]

Those metrics are generated by individual plans and individual actions. In theory, you could - and that is the idea, that is the strength of the model - funnel that all the way down so that the practitioner on the front line can see the golden thread all the way from his or her practice on a daily basis, all the way up to the strategic and overarching ambition. You are right, there is potential to do that. We are very keen to pursue that and realise that. Certainly when we were drafting the law we had in mind some of the quite inspirational speakers from I think it was Leeds at the time; you may well have been at the Hotel de France when we had that presentation. They have very much managed to achieve that after a lot of work, and that is very much our hope.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

So that is a yes then.

**Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:**

Sorry, yes.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I asked that question so that the new acting group director can get that notion as well. Sorry, Senator Vallois, I interrupted because it was something we asked about before. I will let you continue, sorry.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

It is very interesting but in terms of the data and enabling that ability to have that quality outcome in terms of outcome-based accountability, I suppose what is the realistic timeline that we could point

to, to kind of say: “Now we have that information, now we have that data and now we can look at that golden thread and prove that there are good outcomes coming from this piece of work?”

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I think that all comes down to baselining. You need to know where the service is right now and then you can measure, as we go forward, whether it is getting better or it is not getting better. All the heads of service are working with our informatics team in C.Y.P.E.S. The panel receives more information so we have got a lot better at capturing data and putting it into a format that is easy to understand and also gives a good story over a timeline of where things are changing either for the better or for the worse. All heads of service have been working with our informatics team as this is being built to capture the important data in this baselining, so that we can see a continual level of either improvement or where things need to be looked at.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

In terms of that baseline, Minister, do you know roughly what point in time we are using the baseline for in order to make that measurement work?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I am sure there is historic data that has been captured so we are starting to build up what it would look like, but without my officers being able to come in, it is hard ... maybe Andrew might be able to help. Andrew, you are going to be a saviour, thank you.

**Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:**

I am not sure about saviour. In terms of the children’s strategic plan, we have already published those baselines and we have used surveys in the past because that is where most of the baselines are generated from, to give us an understanding of where we are coming from. We have used those baselines to inform the direction which we want to send the trend. I think you pick up a very important point, if I may, in terms of outcomes do generally take a longer period of time to change, which is exactly why we need to understand some of the service level activity and ask questions of children and families about are we making a difference because we can get that information on a quicker basis, so the cycle is quicker, so the feedback loop is quicker. Then we can understand in terms of our service improvement where we need to change. But all of that feeds the overall outcomes. But you are quite right, the outcome change, up or down, will generally take longer to move. But nevertheless, as Rob has said previously, what is happening is we are orientating our service level measures around those big outcomes and, in time, with a common endeavour we can both understand and celebrate where we can and also redouble our efforts where we know we are going in the wrong direction. That level of insight I think will come to us as we continue on our journey around using data because it is an insight.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

Finally from me, in terms of the outcomes-based accountability performance framework, is there any guidance that sits around that, whether it is published or whether it is internal for staff or for yourself, Minister? Is that guidance available?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I am going to say, Andrew, we do have that framework.

**Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:**

Yes, outcomes-based accountability has been the Government's default approach to measuring performance, and you can see that in other areas of Government. Whether there is published guidance is a good point. There has certainly been quite extensive trading and we have enjoyed - and I mean that - some of the inputs from N.C.B. (National Children's Bureau) and previous colleagues in data and I.T. (information technology), but whether there is anything written down under the label of guidance I am not sure. But that is maybe something we could look at going forward.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

Just to get a commitment from the Minister to make sure that there is some form of guidance because historically what we have heard is that we collect lots of data but we do not necessarily utilise it in the right way or analyse it in the right way. Surely having some form of guidance would enable some form of standard or expected standard on the way to make sure that the framework does what it says on the tin.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

There is a good old I.T. saying that says for any kind of data that you are collecting, if you put rubbish in you will only get rubbish out. So the guidance has to be more around making sure that there is a consistency of quality of data that goes in and that it is captured correctly. That needs to be done in a consistent manner. Any new member of staff needs to be aware of the requirement to do that. The informatics team that we have got worked with our data all the time to make sure there is a consistent approach in delivering the reports but, again, if you are not putting the right information in, whatever the informatics team will take out will not be of any quality. That is the important part, which is this has to be captured and it has to be captured in this way. The director general, Rob, is on the call and I am sure he will be taking note, but I will get back to you. I am sure there is some level of guidance. I do not know if Susan can hear us yet, but if Susan can now hear us, can she speak, and can she introduce herself?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Can I just say before you start, Susan, can we make these answers a bit briefer because what we are getting at the moment is, again, lots of technical speak. I have got jotted down “orientating our service level measures”. The question I would ask, as we talk about all of this, is: what will children experience is different from now and what will children understand about what you are doing? If what you are going to do is reorientate your service level measures so that they become whatever, which to be quite frank has become a little bit word salad, without being rude. This is about children. Then what we are going to get is children’s experiences which may not improve but you have evidence that you think they have improved. What is going to be different for children? Are you listening to them? Because they are not going to understand all of this. To be quite frank, I do not think most adults will understand most of this. I really think we should be trying to, forgive me, understand what is going to be different in the experience from now given that we have a lot of very highly positioned people working on this.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Noted. I will hand over to Susan to hopefully just answer that last part operationally what is happening.

**Group Director, Integrated Services and Commissioning:**

Susan Devlin, group director for integrated services and commissioning in C.Y.P.E.S. Apologies, I do not know what happened earlier. I think lots of people would have loved to have turned me off at various times. I only came on so I did not hear the initial bit of the question, Chair. But I think you are right. I would want to assure that what we are trying to do with some of the outcomes we are seeing: are you safer or are you healthier, are you learning more, are you at school more? We are doing some surveys with children. We use a little tool called the Outcome Star, so we do that with children and families sitting down with them. We are doing an annual survey with parents of children who have additional needs. So we are asking them what has changed. What is different? What has worked for you? I do not want to go on too long because I heard your slight admonishment.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

It is just that we have so much to get through, that is all.

**Group Director, Integrated Services and Commissioning:**

I appreciate that. So I hope that gives you a flavour of what we are doing in relation to that.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I am pleased to hear that, and that is the key. We have talked about putting children first and the voice of children. I think it is very important that within Children’s Services they really are at the

forefront of the changes that are being made, so that they understand what would be better for them. Because I think that lack of trust that still exists - and let us be honest, it does, and we understand why with the Care Inquiry - absolutely that needs to be repaired. I think we talked about this 3 years ago when we first started Scrutiny. I think that is really important. Have you finished, Senator Vallois, because I will just go on to ... I was going to ask about the surveys of families supported by the additional needs team. You said that they undertake an annual survey and qualitative surveys for participants. What is the frequency of the qualitative surveys and who is responsible for administering them?

**Group Director, Integrated Services and Commissioning:**

At the moment, there is an annual survey done by that team and it is done by the team but not the worker who has been involved with the families. It is not independent per se. We do all want to develop more of that survey work, whether that is calling people, and we want to do that by different people who deliver the intervention.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I think you have spotted what I was going to ask because that it is the key thing, is it not? Particularly with qualitative work because you are asking about people's feelings about what they have received and how they react. Sometimes it can be difficult if you deliver the service but some say: "When you delivered that service it did not work for me because you just got it wrong." So it does need to be independent. How is that qualitative data collated? There is probably some quite personal stuff there.

**Group Director, Integrated Services and Commissioning:**

At the moment, we do not have a sophisticated electronic system around that so it is fairly rudimentary. It is collected, it is held, it is confidentially held, it is anonymised so nobody knows Mrs. Smith said she loved her worker and that was a big deal for her or, conversely, Mr. Smith found it very difficult to open up to whatever. At the moment it is fairly simple and manually held but we do want to look at a more sophisticated approach and a much more regularised approach.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Who is responsible for ensuring the findings of those surveys are acted upon? Because that could be quite difficult if it is an ad hoc system for storing the information.

**Group Director, Integrated Services and Commissioning:**

I would not like to say it was ad hoc because it is held and it is used. We want to improve it though. The head of service for, for instance, family and community support who is responsible for early help will hold that and will be responsible for understanding the needs. That then contributes to, I

suppose, a commissioning approach where you analyse your need, you plan and then deliver services accordingly. We have changed, for instance, some of our parenting programmes because of feedback. We have managed to keep a lot of them going through lockdown, even when we did them online. So we have learned some things from that. That would then feed up through the management system, first of all, and to my management team, and then the department.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Just one final thing on this: do you think there is ability, capacity and willingness to act when the feedback is not good to a point where perhaps the feedback is of serious concern? Because I think that is something in the past, people feel that there is no point in saying anything because nothing will happen anyway.

[10:30]

Then all of these qualitative surveys are just playing lip service saying everything is okay. Just playing devil's advocate for a moment.

**Group Director, Integrated Services and Commissioning:**

I think the short answer to that question is yes. Is it always easy and sometimes we are scratching our heads where we consider it may be? But the short answer is yes, we are absolutely open to that. We have to be. We all know very well the findings of the Care Inquiry and certainly I am not aware of anyone that is not mindful of that as they go about their daily work.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

That is why I asked the question obviously, that is what we are here for. Senator Vallois, do you want to ask the questions regards the C.A.M.H.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) roles?

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

This follows on with regards to the ministerial response; the Government Plan. It is noted that 9 roles in respect of C.A.M.H.S. are live in January 2022. What is your expected timescale to recruit these roles and should they all be successfully recruited to, how many further roles do you expect to recruit in 2022?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

On a headline, we are working in partnership with the U.K. (United Kingdom)-based agency that specialises in this area called Penna. We still have the 9 roles up, which is the service manager for early intervention, behaviour adviser, a specialist eating disorder professional, psychologists and

mental health practitioner, so that is the overarching. I am going to hand over to Susan who is working with the recruitment to let you know the timescales that she feels we are going to meet and if there are any extra roles that will be required.

**Group Director, Integrated Services and Commissioning:**

I am delighted to say we were also recruiting yesterday and have recruited 2 posts yesterday. We have got off to a really positive start. That has buoyed us along a bit. We have got posts in, that will go through the process of closing. It will depend on each individual when they will be able to take up post. Where we have got critical issues around that we of course are backfilling with temporary staff. We have had a lot of interest, people contacting us wanting to know much more about the service. I think there is a little bit of a buzz around the service just now, which is great. So some people, I guess, will be in in 3 months. For some people it will be 6 months. We are kind of going all out in relation to getting these posts advertised because recruitment can take a number of months, as you know. But we are making good progress. I would like to think we would have another half a dozen folk in within the next couple of months and then we will have to see how that goes. We will continue to advertise pretty routinely and regularly but the service is fairly stable. We have had not a huge turnover either, which is helpful, just now.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

That is very helpful, thank you. In terms of the impact that each one of those individuals that are brought in, what impact does that have in terms of the waiting lists or the ability to start doing some form of prevention modelling to assist early help?

**Group Director, Integrated Services and Commissioning:**

Minister, I could pick this up, if that is helpful? The post that we interviewed for yesterday was the manager for the early intervention service, so we have identified somebody that is going to start in 4 weeks. We are putting from later on this month - I think, 21st February - we will have a mental health practitioner sitting in the Children's Hub, so they will start to triage the referrals much more quickly. Part of our redesign has been to create a duty and assessment team, which has made quite a significant difference to waiting lists and to time waiting for treatment. That is still a work in progress. It is not as good as we would like it to be but that duty team is making their quick triage decisions about who needs to be seen. Some of the old people who are in real distress are seen the same day. Quite a number of them. Some people have to wait longer but we are generally doing telephone consultations within a couple of days for everyone that is referred to the service now. They may have to wait a little. We have also commissioned services. For example, we have Youthful Minds working with us so that anybody who is on the waiting list for treatment can be offered support through them while they are waiting. Say they are waiting for family therapy, for example, Mind Jersey will offer support during that period. So we are trying to bolster as we build the service.

I think we are doing that quite well. Getting the new early intervention manager will help significantly because they will start to build that team.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

Thank you very much for that update. Just finally from me, in the Government Plan the States Assembly approved £400,000 for the young people intensive support programme. We are now just over a month into 2022 and just wonder if we could have an update with how the start of that programme is working.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Shall I hand over to Mark? If you could introduce yourself please.

**Director, Safeguarding and Care:**

My name is Mark Owers, and I am the director of safeguarding and care. The intensive youth support programme secured £1.3 million in total last year. The £400,000 you refer to we have added to that within our department budget. The new head of service started on Monday this week. The service specification has been drafted., the new premises at Highlands have been secured, which includes a dedicated space for young people to use out of hours, and partners across government, critically including S.o.J.P. (States of Jersey Police) and our health colleagues and the probation service, are fully committed to making the service a success. The implementation plan is being developed and we aim to have the programme up and running as soon as possible, hopefully within the next 6 weeks.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

That is fantastic. Just a commitment from the Minister, in terms of would it be possible to have an update with regards to this programme at the end of quarter one this year so that we know where it is and what is happening with regards to the programme?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Always happy to give an update. I think there is a lot we will need to update you on at the end of quarter one, which seems like a really good timescale for a lot of things that we are doing across C.Y.P.E.S. that you have asked for. But absolutely, there will be a commitment from me to give you an update.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

Fantastic, thank you.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Some questions regards COVID-19 response. Minister, do you believe a post-COVID 19 recovery strategy specifically for children and young people should be developed? If so, what do you think the key cornerstones of such a strategy should be?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

If I was going to say outright what we should be looking for at the end of COVID-19 when we can start saying what the end of the strategy is, getting back to normal as quickly as possible so that children are playing together in their playing fields and they are going out and socialising in a way that they are not fearful of, and the like. A strategy as such, what I would be reticent to do is try and create a strategy that then tries to create a system that would mean that children do not feel like they are back to normal, that we are constantly trying to do something where it would not be just a normal wake-up, play, go to school, meet their friends, be with their family. So I think that what is important is that every service that touches on children's life, be it from nursery to education, to third sector, to sports and keep an eye on what is going on with children with a view to making sure that we know, as adults that touch children's lives, what normal looked like, where some of them will not because they have been brought up within a pandemic. We should be making sure that everyone is aware and that we are keeping an eye on it so we can move forward and try and get things back to normal, if they are not. That is our responsibility as adults that know what normal looks like. Building a strategy can be quite a hard thing to say to try and get back to normal so I think we just need to be aware of what we are doing.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Is that a specific recovery strategy aimed at children or do you think it is one where children are just part of it?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I think we need to just be aware that we need to get back to normal. I think a strategy, in its very outset, does not do that because it tries to define what we should be doing. We should just be aware of it.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

What actions will we take in order to undertake some form of recovery for children because we have heard they have missed a lot of learning, they have missed a lot of socialisation? In early years, for example, our children have missed development months, there is a growing mental health crisis, there is growing numbers of families falling into poverty, growing numbers of children receiving Jersey Premium, for example. What is the strategy of recovery or is it just being aware ... surely there must be some form of strategy to help those children recover and will it be specifically for children or part of a wider plan?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

We do have the children's plan that we have got going and we are going to be updating as it goes along. Whoever takes on this position I suspect will be updating the children's plan for what they see as the Minister going forward. There are things in the children's plan that will fall off that have been achieved because that is what the plan is all about. It is a rolling document. That will keep an eye on what things we need to do. We are putting plans in place with social recovery funds to make sure that there are more educational opportunities in things like summer holidays and breaks, so that we can try and help children in an appropriate way to catch up on schooling and education. But this is where I think everyone needs ... the plan should be, let us get back to normal. That is around making sure that our mental health services are where they are so we can start bringing children back. We are aware of what is going on and we are already putting plans in place right now to effect some of the things that we have seen that have been exasperated over COVID. I do not think a specific strategy that was set out would work as such. We are not out of the pandemic. We do not know when the end of the pandemic will be. We need to start carrying on dealing with what we are dealing with right now in the best way we can to mitigate the challenges that children have and start working towards what does normal look like. That is my view as a Minister.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

You do not feel the need for a specific strategy for children?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I do not.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

The panel notes the impact on children and young people is not just seen in education but in all areas of their lives. What discussions have you had with ministerial colleagues in relation to addressing some of the overriding issues affecting children and young people specifically in your Minister for Children and Education remit?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I raise issues of what is happening to children through the Council of Ministers, through some of the multi-agency boards that I chair, like the Strategic Partnership Board and the Children's Leadership Board, and the Corporate Parenting Board. My fellow Ministers and Assistant Ministers and the like, senior officers, are all part of those multi-agency boards. We talk about the issues that affect children through the multi-agency there. The Children's Commissioner has been invited to the Council of Ministers a number of times and we talk quite broadly about some of the areas that affect children in other ministerial portfolios and the challenges we have asking for assistance in those areas to

broaden that awareness of what is going on, so it is not just happening at an officer level, it happens at a political level as well.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

From those discussions, what do you think are the biggest challenges within Government to respond in relation to children and young people?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

The biggest challenge we have seen recently has clearly been to do with housing, schooling, during the pandemic. We have done a lot of work. We have put in co-funded payroll schemes. It has been a very unusual time where we have had to affect people's lives in very different ways. It is about making sure that people are safe in their jobs so that they can afford food to put on the tables for their families. It is about making sure they have continuation of jobs, that the businesses are still in place. The real struggle is housing in some instances for children. But making sure that they have a consistent education and they are in school, and they are learning. That has been one of the biggest challenges that we have had to face, which is making sure children are safe, they are educated, they are in school and they are looked after.

[10:45]

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Going back to that point regards the protection of children, COVID numbers do seem to be increasing in children at the moment who are not vaccinated. What do you intend to do to monitor the impact of COVID-19 in children in the medium and long term? I will give you an example. The introduction of air filters in schools, do we have a date for that yet? What other measures will you be taking to monitor and then act on that impact of COVID on young people?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

The air filters have been ordered. I do not know if they have arrived as yet, but as soon as they are there they are going to be going into schools. We monitor daily children absences in school, positive cases on L.F.T.s (lateral flow tests) for children and teachers on a daily basis, and the panel gets a weekly update on those figures. It is a continual monitorisation. I have said quite clearly that while we are de-escalating some of the restrictions in public life, I have stated very strongly in C.A.M. (Competent Authority Ministers) and I have stated to officers and the like that due to the numbers still being high and staying at around 100 a day for children that we do not de-escalate in schools; that we need to make sure that children and parents are taking responsibility to make sure there are L.F.T.s daily because that is the first port of call. I do not want to force them but I asked that the parents consider the vaccination because that is a way to keep children in school and safe because

we know that COVID and the Omicron variant effects is 5 times more likely to affect unvaccinated children and people. We have to keep some level of restriction in schools because children are legally mandated to be in the schools, which is why I have not asked for the restriction or removal of restrictions within schools. But I have given it up to the head teachers and the teachers to make the call about at what level that is within their schools because teachers and head teachers know their schools better than I could.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay. But school-led contact tracing will be ceased from today, so you are relying upon parents to test before they go in?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Absolutely, yes. It was quite a heavy burden on teachers' workload to be able to do the contact tracing and it did not really have too much of an effect, is what I am told from public health. But the best early-warning system is the L.F.T.s every day.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay. Who will monitor that they are being taken?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

The parents.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

The schools will just be relying entirely on parents to do that?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

We have to, it is their children and it is the responsibility of the parents. To ask all the teachers just to go and get children to do L.F.T.s first thing in the morning when they come into school, I would also have a problem with putting that kind of burden and workload on teachers, which would seem to be they are already dealing with so much and they are working so hard and I do thank them for that.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

What plans and policies, if any, do you have for identifying any what might be called delayed issues among children and young people that may show in the coming years from the pandemic, either in terms of COVID itself as a virus or the other impacts of the pandemic of their experience of it? What other things have you got for identifying any issues there in the long term?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

In the long term if it is a health issue it will be picked up through the health professionals. All teachers are trained to keep an eye out for exceptions and safeguarding and changes in the way that children ... I am sure there is no specific policy. I think all professionals that work with children would be aware if something is not happening right and will report it up the ranks so that it can be dealt with at an appropriate level if it turns out to be something. But there is no specific policy to look out for anything, as far as I know.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay. It is just that numbers are going up in schools. One school had a year group home today, for example. I just wondered if there does need to be some sort of policy, perhaps part of a specific recovery programme in schools and for young people, which you said are not necessarily needed, to track that long term because sometimes impacts can be later on. Those children, for example, who may have missed exams entirely and are going on to their first external exams when they go to university, for example, is there any plan to monitor or track that so that impact can be put in place?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I think all children are monitored within the school environment to see whether they are suddenly falling behind. I would expect that the teachers are constantly monitoring their pupils and they understand whether they are meeting what would be expected or was expected or not and they have something in place within the school environment. Chair, you are a teacher, I am sure that you did it all the time with your pupils, you had a constant view on if something just was not right, and there are already processes in place to capture those things.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Yes, academically but COVID has brought a whole new world of challenges there, which I think does need a more joined-up approach. But to move on, you have mentioned about recovery work, so I do not think there is any point in me asking that question. Senator Vallois, do you want to ask the stuff on the corporate parenting? Thank you very much.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

Yes, thank you. Minister, what is your assessment of the Government's role of corporate parent, especially in response to the pandemic and children and young people in the care of the Government?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Corporate parenting, especially, as you say, with children that are in the care of the Minister and of Government, the fundamentals of it is that they are our children and we are their parents and we

have to act and behave in a way that any parent would with their own child, be it care of having a safe environment, care of making sure that they are listened to, that they have the same opportunities as they would if they were in care of their own parents. That is the role of the corporate parenting, so we have to have a holistic view across all of the Government on what we can do which would give the same opportunities and care of the children in our care that somebody would have if it was their own children; that is my view of it.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

Understanding what the role of corporate parent is that you have just clearly explained to us, what is your assessment of the Government's role as corporate parent in response to the pandemic or just what you are seeing as Minister at present? What is your assessment of that?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

My assessment is the work we have been doing and we have been really ramping up for our children in care - and Mark Owers is here and can go to the details on there - we have been very cognisant of the challenges that it has been and we have had more meetings to make sure that these children are listened to and looked after. Across the whole of Government, I think there are places where I felt that we could be stronger and that is to do with care leavers and housing and we need to start looking at things like foster caring and support in that area from other departments. This is where I talk about going to the Council of Ministers, I have been raising these issues directly with Ministers. I think that the direct services that we provide to our children in care has been ramped up and though through challenging times has been really good. I think that there is more to be done as a corporate parent across the whole of Government. Do you want to hear from the Director of Safeguarding on his views as well from being at the front line or is it just ...

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

It was more so from a Minister's perspective in terms of the assessment of how Government were taking that into account and carrying out their role as corporate parent. It is not just the Minister for Children and Education's job, it is the whole of Government's responsibility.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, agreed.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

Just to understand in terms of - and I am happy to hear either from yourself or an officer - ensuring the rights of the children are put at the heart of decision-making in relation to children and young people and how you maybe provide us with an outline about how you have managed to do that during your time as Minister and how you continue to do that.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes. To me it is extremely important and, as I say, I regularly meet with the Children's Commissioner to talk about such issues that are raised with the Children's Commissioner directly, as she does come to me with specific cases and we do highlight from there. But I will hand over to Mark to talk about the rights of the child and how that has been enforced or strengthened or not during the pandemic. Please, Mark.

**Director of Safeguarding and Chief Social Worker:**

Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Senator. I think, critically, we have now established our Children in Care Council. In Jersey we call it the Care Investors. We regularly now meet with children in our care and children who have left our care. It is a properly constituted group with a chair and a sub-chair. They have defined, with stabilitated support from us, within our standards and quality section. Within the Children's Service or Children's Social Care we have line management under me responsible for the actual delivery of social work and family support services. Then I have a principal social worker, who is responsible for standards and quality. She and her team are responsible for the independent reviewing officers, who are, essentially, the custodians of children's rights. That is enshrined in law in England and while that law is only just coming here, we have long had I.R.O.s (independent reviewing officers) who are responsible for upholding children's rights. They facilitate, together with our participation officer and our mentoring officer, the care ambassadors group and young people are now speaking very loudly in our service about their experiences and what they want and they are holding us to account as to when they have told us what they want whether we deliver that or not. Minister, you will recall they were at the last Corporate Parenting Board, they are now formal members of the Corporate Parenting Board. It is a board now that is much more about our young people because their voice, their experiences and their wishes and aspirations are in the room. I think that is the most powerful way of showing in evidence that we have made some really good progress in our corporate parenting. We are strengthening our strategic capacity as the lead department for corporate parenting, so that I have more scope to work harder with my colleagues in other Government departments so that we have a One Gov approach to corporate parenting.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

Just on the back of that, Minister, we are aware that the Corporate Parenting Board had not met for a period of time and I go back to the point that it is not just your responsibility as Minister for Children and Education with regards to children's rights and corporate parenting. What impacts do you think that may have had in terms of the ability of other Ministers taking into account children's rights and understanding what is happening as a corporate parent without attending for that significant period of time?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, there were some real challenges, not only from COVID during the time that the board did not meet but obviously with the change of Ministers, multiple changes of Ministers. The board were supposed to meet the day before we were going to have the elections to see who was the current Minister for Children and Education. I felt it was wrong to have that board without knowing who the Minister for Children and Education was when the decision was going to be the next day with 3 options for the Assembly to choose, and I still think that was the right choice. It would have been unfair if any of the other candidates would have got it. The meetings were still going on, so the Corporate Parenting Board is very much a highlight overseeing board updating from each department to all across a section of multi-agency and things. Meetings were still happening behind the scenes with senior practitioners and senior members of the civil service responsibility. The Home Affairs team were still hearing from the C.Y.P.E.S. team about some of the challenges. There is still a lot of multi-agency work that happens behind the scenes, it just was not at a highlighted ministerial level. But I was being updated regularly by my team on my weekly ministerial meetings about what was happening, not just in my department but from my team about what was happening at other areas, such as Home Affairs and Health. The information was still getting to the place it needed to be, there just was not the overarching minuted meeting that is what the Corporate Parenting Board does with some of the other stakeholders. I have invited Scrutiny to take part in the multi-agency boards that are there as well. That was just the one thing, it was not the board but the work was still continuing.

[11:00]

I am confident that even though the board had not met the outcomes were still being looked at to be beneficial to children.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

Okay, thank you for that. In terms of Children's Rights Impact Assessments, have any been undertaken to date in respect of the response to COVID-19 and, if so, could these be shared with the panel?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

The Children's Rights Impact Assessments are normally associated with some of the propositions that are put through to the Assembly. It is about when we are changing laws or amending laws or putting in new laws that the C.R.I.A.s (Children's Rights Impact Assessments) will be done. We have the new Children's Law that is coming in that has a C.R.I.A. attached to it. We will have the Due Regard Law. Andrew Heaven is here, he has been working heavily on that and obviously the Due Regard Law will mean that all new law changes will have C.R.I.A.s in place on them, which I

absolutely think it is going to be amazing for this Island. But, Andrew, how many C.R.I.A.s have we got? I will give you the specifics from Andrew.

**Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:**

Yes. The C.R.I.A.s that I am aware of, Senator Vallois, there were C.R.I.A.s completed for the return to school and particularly to the pandemic is what you are asking, is it not? There is a C.R.I.A. completed for return to school and I am aware also that there was a C.R.I.A. done for the vaccination programme. Those 2 specifically around COVID are ones that I am aware of and I can, of course, liaise with colleagues who wrote those C.R.I.A.s and make them available to the panel as you request.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

That is very helpful.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Sorry, can I just ask, would they be public documents?

**Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:**

That is a good question. I think while we have been writing the law with regard due regard there has been a period of time where we have been piloting, is it not? A number of elected Members completed C.R.I.A.s. Why I think it is a good question is because I am not sure whether the extent to which those have been published consistently ... I know that ...

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

They go with the propositions because they are in the public domain. I just think a C.R.I.A. could be a very useful tool when looking, for example, at child vaccination to disseminate information.

**Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:**

For sure, so ...

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Sorry, I interrupted again but I just thought that was a right point now, yes.

**Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:**

Indeed. Just to be clear, under the draft law it is envisaged that all C.R.I.A.s completed will be published on a routine basis for exactly that reason. But I can, Senator Vallois, liaise with colleagues and make those available.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

I am grateful for that, thank you. Finally from me, Minister, the Children and Families Hub was set up early in the pandemic. What data, if any, do you have around the access to that Children and Families Hub in terms of families or the quality and quantitative data that sits around that in terms of measuring its impact?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes. I think the Children and Families Hub has been a real needed success during this pandemic especially and I thank the officers and staff for setting it up during such a difficult time. I referred to, Mark, what data ...

**Director of Safeguarding and Chief Social Worker:**

It is Susan, I think Susan, Minister.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Susan, we do collect data, it is coming in obviously, not on a very personal level but I believe it has been a good success. Susan, I will hand over.

**Group Director, Integrated Services and Commissioning:**

Yes. Senator, I cannot give you the exact figures today but I can pass them to you. But it is around about an average of 200 referrals coming into the hub on a kind of monthly basis. We are busy, the hub is busy. As you know, the hub sits before the M.A.S.H. (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub), so we have seen a slowing down of things going through the M.A.S.H. We are seeing lots being picked up as early help. I think when I was struggling to get into the meeting you may have been talking about early help and some of the performance. At the moment we are doing kind of manual collation but we are going to be joining the Mosaic recording system that social care and Mark's service uses, so we will have an early help module in there. We are hoping that will be live by the end of quarter one this year. That will allow us to have much better and quicker performance. We also have our partners do a monthly spreadsheet, which is a little bit cumbersome just now but we are hoping they will be able to get their data in on this system as well. We are seeing 200-ish, give or take a bit, up and down of that, seeing reduced referrals into M.A.S.H. Mark has a performance meeting every month, so we are looking at those figures. That is a brief overview, Senator, but I can get you more detail if that will be helpful, if you wanted that.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

Yes. No, I think it probably would be helpful. You have been close to this work and looking at this, what is a new system that is being in place for early help, early intervention. What would you say are the main successes and maybe some areas that you have identified that is not quite so good

and maybe we need to improve? That is always the case with any system that is put in, it is always good to have that check and balance to make sure that we are trying to get it right first time.

**Group Director, Integrated Services and Commissioning:**

As you know, we got the hub started kind of earlier than anticipated. We jumped up and set that up at the beginning of lockdown really. I think what we are seeing is the hub and early help is being fairly well regarded by people. I think there is a credibility being built up that it is somewhere you can go for help. There is a working with families approach, so we went from calling people family support workers to family partnership workers because we wanted to work in partnership. I think the service is building. It is probably a bit early to come to several conclusions. It is a bit of a watching scenario right at the minute and we are still getting a lot of our feedback looked at, as I talked earlier. But we are getting good feedback from people, I think we are getting in early. We have big issues around, as you know, emotional well-being coming through and also behavioural issues. One of the areas we want to develop is around behavioural support for children and families. The head of service that is responsible for C.A.M.H.S., that is his speciality, behavioural support. We are looking to see how we grow that bit of the service. That is a little bit of an overview. Is that helpful, Senator?

**Director of Safeguarding and Chief Social Worker:**

Minister, if I may just add to that, Susan, in social care we have seen a reduction of the families that need to come into the acute end of our continuum of need, which means that we have less work to enable our social workers and family support workers to spend more time with the families that need the most intense support, so that is a really important success. We are also able to step down families who still need help but do not need to be in social care and can benefit from the service that Susan speaks about.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

Okay, that is helpful, thank you very much. I will pass back to the Chair around therapeutic services.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Just on a previous note, I have just emailed the panel. The C.R.I.A.s that we mentioned about the vaccine and schools opening are on the public website, so they have been published publicly and I have sent you the links.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

That is really useful, yes. I saw them in the chat, thanks for that. In terms of waiting lists for therapeutic services, Minister, one of the key themes arising from submissions to our review have been about the waiting lists for therapeutic services for children and young children have seen

significant waits before appointments are accessed. We have had reports ranging from 6 weeks up to 6 months. What are you doing in order to ensure children and young people are accessing services as quickly as possible and the appropriate services as well?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

We have seen a reduction down to about 52 days which is on that from previous years. We are working in partnership with Keith to work on our waiting lists to triage and make sure that within those waiting lists that we are getting the right help to the right people in the right places. We are aware of waiting lists, that they need to come down even more and we know that, but we are working with partner agencies and trying to make sure that nobody is waiting in a waiting list for something that they should be better off somewhere else, which is where the partnership works. But Susan will be able to help you with defined details if you want to cut down into more of that.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I think this is some idea of how many people are waiting, you say 52 days, is that an average?

**Group Director, Integrated Services and Commissioning:**

Yes. Chair, you are absolutely right, we have seen a kind of unprecedented rise in referrals coming into C.A.M.H.S. and I mentioned earlier that we are going to put a C.A.M.H.S. practitioner in the Children and Families Hub so that we can ... because sometimes we get early intervention referrals that are put into C.A.M.H.S. and we have to sort that out and then go somewhere else. But of course it then takes up time with very specialist workers. We will have somebody, a mental health practitioner, doing that triage at the hub. If something does not need to come to C.A.M.H.S. and it might get early help or it should go to social care, that is what it will do and it will do that much quicker. We have also put a duty and assessment team into C.A.M.H.S. Just this week in fact, looking at the number of referrals that had come into C.A.M.H.S. this week and yesterday morning for this week, so the first 3 days they had had 38 referrals; that is absolutely unprecedented. Where we have got to is we are now looking at the time between referral and a complete assessment. Between the kind of referral completed assessment we have reduced that to 4 weeks and most people are getting that assessment completed in 21 days. If you compare that with some of the baselines that are happening in the U.K., people are waiting up to 18 months to even have a contact in the U.K. There is a fairly significant difficulty with those specialist services. We are much better than that, it ...

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Yes, I think the comparison with the U.K., we can see that that is the case. From that, this leads quite nicely into what I was going to ask. We have noted that instances of mental health issues

among children and young people have increased since the onset of the pandemic. Minister, what do you believe are the key reasons for this and how are you addressing them where possible?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

My personal opinion about the key aspects of why mental health issues have risen is the whole world has turned around and created a complete atmosphere of fear over the last 2 years. Do not go out of your house, do not see your friends, watch out for your grandparents might pass away if you go near them. The whole media, the whole world, everything that has gone on since this pandemic started has created a whole atmosphere of fear and terror. As adults, we have grown up and we learn coping mechanisms and we understand why we think the way that we think and cognitive behaviour therapy and learning like that. Young people over the last 2 years have not had that ability to learn it that way but are, again, in growing terms, certainly in teenagers that question more than anyone else what is going on around them and how they affect life around them, have had to deal with an unprecedented amount of stress, fear and isolation. But, again, I know mental health experts talking, and seeing the world around me, that is where I feel that things have been exasperated.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Do you feel that the pandemic has exasperated the problems that existed in society; poor housing, inequality, poverty, for example? Do you think that is also some of the reasons for increasing mental health issues among children who really do suffer on the front line of those issues?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I do not think it has created any more poor housing than we have had before. I think it has highlighted when people have to stay at home how the effects of poor housing has on people if they cannot leave their properties and they are stuck and isolated within inadequate housing. Certainly the fact of how fragile our economy is for jobs and how much support and help we have required from migration workers and where that affects, absolutely.

[11:15]

I think what it has done is in some instances shone a light, like they said about New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina was there, so it did not create a third world country, it uncovered one. That is the kind of thing that these kind of big global things do, it certainly does. It shines a light on the world and in some instances, hopefully, it can make things better but in most instances it will highlight where things are bad.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

What do you think the role of the Minister for Children and Education is in addressing those issues that have had that light shone on them? For example, the increasing use of foodbanks and so on, what do you think needs to happen there, given that we have this commitment to put children first?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

My role with the Children's Commissioner is definitely when we are discussing any such changes or policy within ...

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Sorry, I meant you as Minister for Children and Education, sorry, not the ...

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

That is what I am saying, the role of the Minister for Children and Education I personally believe is what I do is that when we are discussing items around the Council of Ministers is to always think about whatever we are talking about that the role that that would affect in children's lives and to highlight and challenge. We very much highlight what this could mean for children in the Island. I do believe that is what I do within the Council of Ministers, certainly within the Competent Authorities. I am not a Competent Authorities Minister, I attend all of the meetings. I have vociferously called out for the rights of children in anything that we have done, that is my role.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay, and we have got quite a few questions. I just want to ask a really specific one. It is something we asked the other day. Do you think that we really care as an Island to be putting children first if we do have children still relying upon foodbanks to get through the week and to be fed?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I think we can turn round and call out like instances of things that are not there but it does not change the fact that to say we have one child that is hungry, therefore the whole of Government is not putting children first in other aspects of what we are doing is a misinterpretation of what is going on. To say that Government is not putting children first because of certain aspects in isolation does not really give the credits to the really hard-working nurses, social workers, teachers and everyone that do put children first on behalf of Government every single day.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I was not suggesting it was, I do not think it is a comparison in that way, but anyway we will move on. I am conscious of time. Senator Vallois, do you want to ask some of the questions that we were going to on the Children and Young People Law because I do want to get down to the assisted living outside Island question because I think it is quite an important one.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

Yes. No, just very briefly on the Children and Young People Law, Minister, where do the existing offers to those in care and young people who are in care fit into the draft law, if at all?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Everything that we are currently providing is also provided for in the draft law, so nothing will fall away in the draft law from the provision that we were already given. The current services will not be diminished or removed in any way but the new draft law of the Children's Law is about enhancing it and expanding it to make sure that more people that interact with children have a legal responsibility to know why they are interacting with children, what their responsibility is to interact with children and to plan for how they do that and make it public. But I can hand over to an officer if you want to have a breakdown into any more detail.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

Just before you do, Minister, if I can, just specifically is there any statutory requirement in the law to provide financial and other support to those children and young people who are under the care of Children's Services?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Can I pass down at a technical level to Kate maybe who will be able to answer that? Kate, if you do can you introduce yourself fully?

**Senior Policy Officer:**

Yes, hello, I am Kate, a senior policy officer. I work for Andrew Heaven in Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance, so we have drafted the law. The law was designed to complement the existing obligations under the original Children's Law and the Minister has an obligation to accommodate and maintain children who are looked after in the original 2002 law. This augments it by obviously well-being plans for looked-after children will include all sorts of things to support their well-being and also the children in care offer and the care leaver offer that is under the corporate parenting bit of the law will also require that services are published that are offered to looked-after children and care leavers. That covers a broad range of things in terms of all sorts of aspects of well-being, including all the kind of living requirements for those children and young people. It will be bespoke, depending on what their well-being needs are, but obviously it is obvious that children need to be accommodated and maintained when they are looked after. In that regard I was not sure, is there a particular thing you were thinking of or ...

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Is the financial support based on delivering things like housing, make sure they have clothes? Is that where the financial support comes from, rather than at a monetary handing-over level? I do not know if that is what you meant, Senator.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

There are a number of things that children may need - it might be moving to university - that would require a full grant rather than a partial grant, so that is just one example. But the reason why I am asking about the statutory requirement is because we all know with legislation there can be semantics at play, so it can either be must or may. There is a big distinguishment between must and may, so it can be at the discretion of the Minister. I suppose the explicit question I am asking is: will you have to, is it a must to provide that offer under the draft law or is it at the Minister's discretion?

**Senior Policy Officer:**

May I take this, Minister?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, please, Kate.

**Senior Policy Officer:**

Yes. As there is for children with the health or development need, in the law it will be the Minister's duty to provide a range and level of services appropriate to meet the assessed well-being needs of looked-after children and care leavers. It is an absolute duty, yes.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

All right, that is interesting.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

That is very helpful, so thank you. Just finally on that then because I recall in one of our hearings that we had, I believe, last year where it was a mention of an issue with an Income Support Law. How will that work in context with the new draft law? That particular example was given around university placements. How will that be taken into context with this new draft law?

**Senior Policy Officer:**

Do you want me to take that?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, please, Kate, you are the expert.

**Senior Policy Officer:**

When the local offer was being put together, the local offer will include offers from other departments, for example, skills or in a case of university grants. When the local offer was put together it reflected things that were already or should already be available. But the new law will basically bring that together by asking corporate parents to publish details of the services that are available, which will include, for example, university and I think the text of the local offer makes that quite clear that young people will be funded to go to university where they wish to go, should they be an eligible care leaver, for example.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

We have made a commitment now for apprenticeship schemes and jobs as well.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

Okay. Can I just understand then? I know the law will give a duty and it is an absolute responsibility, but without a consequential amendment, for example, to the Income Support Law, then surely that would cause conflict with the expectations of the duty of the Minister in this draft law? Will there be any consequential amendments coming forward to ensure there is no conflict against this particular duty?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Let me hand over to Mark Owers who is jumping up and down like a 5 year-old with his hand up at the moment.

**Director of Safeguarding and Chief Social Worker:**

Thank you, Minister. Senator, you are absolutely right that some of the details of our care leavers' lives are not compatible with the way in which our laws have been developed. In the future I think we can all anticipate amendments coming forward as we work out whether they are isolated instances or whether they are things that are defined in legislation that we need to change. In our service we are tracking each of these examples to understand the impact. We use Rob Sainsbury as the accounting officer under the financial rules when we need to to make exemptions. We are trying to do that as quickly as possible. But the personal advisers that each care leaver has is responsible to help navigate Government departments as their kind of main relationship and we are getting much better at finding workarounds and we are logging those things that we need to change in the future.

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

Okay. I could go on a little bit further but we are running out of time so I will pass back to the Chair, but thank you very much.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

No, they are really important questions. I have got a few questions and, hopefully, just really quick answers. Minister, I have the Children Convention Rights (Jersey) Law 202- to be lodged. When will that be lodged and when ...

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I am planning on lodging it on 15th February.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

For debate on the 29th ...

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

For debate on 29th March.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

That is brilliant. Can you provide an outline of any key changes that this legislation has had for its development? That might be quite a long answer, so I think we will do that in writing. There was a question that I did want to ask that came from the Children (Arrangements to Assist Children to Live Outside Jersey) (Amendment) (Jersey) Law, which is coming forward. How do you intend to address what is a perception, certainly a perception outcome, that this change to the overriding law will make it easier for children to be placed off Island?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

The whole idea of this is to make better protection for children if they do happen and this has come from the Royal Court. This is a tough question: how do I change people's perception in a world of social media? That is not an easy task. Can I hand to Andrew about the real going down into the definition of why this is not about making it easier and what is there to put in place?

**Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:**

In terms of the question, I think I would be supporting the Minister to communicate very clearly using our Communications Department what the policy objective is in this example and very clearly trying to reassure what it is not. What we are trying to do here, just for the purpose of clarity, is to ensure that the court, when dealing with or working with these very difficult decisions, operates within a very clear framework. Where there is not clarity, as the Minister has pointed out, and where the court asks for clarity to be made, we are doing so promptly. What we all know on this call is that drift and

delay in these particular scenarios is a disaster. What we are aiming to do and what we will need to do and support the Minister to do is to communicate very, very clearly the purposes of this law and we should be doing that going forward.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

That is, to some extent, why I asked the question because I think it is very important that if there is a misperception that needs to be addressed early rather than being left to develop, but that is an important one to have. Is there any way you can confirm how many off-Island placements have been made since 2017? I think we may have written to you about this. Anyway, we are expecting an answer so it might be best to wait for that answer.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I am just wary if it is under 5 that to say anything in a public forum could identify who they are but ...

**Head of Policy, Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance:**

Mark might know.

**Director of Safeguarding and Chief Social Worker:**

It is certainly possibly less than 5, it is certainly no more than 10. The overall number we had when I arrived, 24 children off-Island, and we now only have 17.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay, so that is a number, that is all right. Minister, just in the final few minutes some sort of legacy issues as we go forward because this, I think, will be the last hearing that we have as Minister for Children and Education. We have one with the education format. What is your assessment of the dual role of Minister for Children and Education? Do you believe this portfolio should be retained in a new Assembly? Should it be split, should it not be there at all?

[11:30]

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I would say that the links between the 2 roles, certainly within the C.Y.P.E.S. Department, has a real synergy. I have found it very helpful to have all of children through education and in care and the likes all under one portfolio. I support it; I think that it has been very helpful. No, I do not think it should be split up. It is a lot of work. Whoever wants to take on this role, it is a lot of hours. It is definitely nowhere near a 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.; you are weekends, you are evenings and you are mornings, but it is very fulfilling.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

What do you believe is the legacy of the Minister for Children and Education, your portfolio introduced since the start of the Assembly? We are looking at producing a legacy report soon for the panel, so we are all thinking about those things.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I think the legacy, starting from Senator Sam Mézec on his behalf, is the amount of money in the Government Plan that has been hard fought for and won throughout the Assembly that has helped to provide much more increased and extended services within the department. When we get the Due Regard Law and the Children's Law passed before the end of this Assembly it will be a milestone of good work for Jersey. It will change the way that we do things for children in this Island. It will be in legislation and it is the start of something amazing. We will be very proud of the whole Assembly when we get this passed, the new Children's Law and having Child Rights Impact Assessment at the very beginning of everything that the new Assembly does. That is going to be a legacy that we can all be extremely proud of that will serve us well far into the future for children on this Island.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay. I am conscious of time but just a couple of little things. There have been views expressed that the response of the Care Inquiry has been slow and not enough has been achieved in that regard. What is your response to that as Minister for Children and Education?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Could you elaborate where those are simply expressed, please?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

From a number of different areas, I believe general comments from the Children's Commissioner, certainly comments from some groups that things need to move quicker with the response to the Care Inquiry. I think the panel ourselves would say that, that there are some things and we know that COVID has delayed things. But just as a general response, do you think that things could have been moved quicker in response to the Care Inquiry, which has had such a significant impact on this Assembly and so on?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I would say it is fair to say maybe if we had moved too fast we would have been doing it wrong. If you go down on the recommendations it is quite significant how many have been completed and how many have been acted and how many improvements have been in place. I feel that the perception that is being put forward that not enough is being done and we have not done it quick

enough, you only have to go down the recommendations and look at what has been achieved, from the fact that we have got a Children's Commissioner and the fact that we are changing laws, the fact that we put more money in places, the fact that we have been speaking to the survivors and working with them in such a compassionate way to try and get some way forward. I feel that the criticism is overly critical and does not take into consideration the absolute lengths and distance that we have travelled. As I have said before in the Assembly, it is all too easy to look up to the top of the mountain to see how far we have yet to climb. Often we do not look backwards to see quite how far up the mountain we have come. When it comes to the recommendations of the Care Inquiry I feel we have moved significantly and at the right pace, so that we were not doing things too rushed, too slapdash to try and deliver, and we have been doing it, so that is my opinion, Chair.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay. Obviously one of the people that made the comment was Senator Gorst, so I will remind you of that. What would be your key legacy points that you would put to the next Minister for Children and Education to take forward - and this will be the last question - in respect of the children's remit? What is your key legacy points? We will finish with that, it seems a nice place to finish.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I would say a couple of things. Make sure you are meeting with the Children's Commissioner regularly. Make sure you meet with the Chief of Police in all aspects of what you do. Make sure that when you are going to meetings that there are actions. Meetings for meetings' sake should not be there. I will open up whoever is the Minister for Children and Education, whether they are one position or 2. I will make sure I am available to sit down and talk about my experiences and some of the challenges with them. Because I think handing over is a really important aspect to what we are doing and I will make that commitment to whoever they are in the next Assembly.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay, thanks for that. Unless there are any questions, Senator Vallois, or anyone from the panel wants to ask a question because I know we have run over time. Anything else? Speak now or ...

**Senator T.A. Vallois:**

No, no, that is fine. Thank you very much, Minister, and officers for your answers today, very much appreciated.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Okay. Thank you very much again, everybody, for your time and with that I will call the hearing to an end. Thank you very much.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Senator.

**Senior Policy Officer:**

Thank you, Chair.

[11:35]