****

**Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel**

Quarterly Public Hearing

**Witness: The Minister for Children and Education**

# Friday, 1st December 2023

**Panel:**

Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central (Chair)

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville (Vice-Chair)

Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée of St. Helier South

Connétable M. O’D. Troy of St. Clement

**Witnesses:**

Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North, The Minister for Children and Education

Connétable R.P. Vibert of St. Peter, Assistant Minister for Children and Education

Mr. R. Sainsbury, Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills

Mr. D. Bowring, Associate Director, Mental Health and Wellbeing

[14:30]

**Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central (Chair):**

Today is 1st December 2023. I would like to draw everyone’s attention to the following. This hearing will be filmed and streamed live. The recording and transcript will be published afterwards on the States Assembly website. All electronic devices, including mobile phones, should be switched to silent. Beginning with introductions; I am Deputy Catherine Curtis, the chair of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel.

**Connétable M. Labey of Grouville (Vice-Chair):**

My name is Connétable Mark Labey. I am the vice-chair.

**Connétable M. O’D. Troy of St. Clement:**

I am Marcus Troy and I am the Constable of St. Clement, and I am a panel member.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée of St. Helier South:**

I am Deputy Porée and a panel member.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Deputy Inna Gardiner. Minister for Children and Education.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

Richard Vibert, Assistant Minister.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Rob Sainsbury, chief officer for the Department of C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills).

**Associate Director, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

Darren Bowering, associate director for Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay, thank you, everyone. The first few questions are to do with C.A.M.H.S., which is Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services. My first question is about the annual report. In the last public hearing, we heard that it will be in much better shape and progress. Please can you explain the measures you are taking to ensure that the next annual report is developed in time for publication in quarter one?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I think it is the best really to give to Darren because he does this work.

**Associate Director, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

I guess we have got potentially another question coming up around C.O.R.C. (Child Outcomes Research Consortium) and outcome measures. But a lot of the work that has gone on in C.A.M.H.S. over the last 2 years has been to improve our data collection. Some of that has been around needing additional staff, so we appointed a data officer. We had a quality and assurance manager last year. We are in a better position in terms of personnel to lead these type of initiatives, such as report, and to be working on informatics and databases. We have also had several meetings with C.O.R.C., which is a child outcomes research consortium who have been helping us advise us on our outcome measures. As we increase our service and we redesign our service, how do we measure the difference we are making to children and families’ lives? So through the course of this year we have introduced a number of different tools, which I can talk about during that question. We have also introduced feedback measures called the Experience of Service questionnaire. In terms of the next report, the date of it is ongoing, being collected and currently being reported by our Informatics team. It is going to be much richer than it has been on previous years. We are going to be able to produce much clearer statistically what difference we make to children’s mental health, and what feedback we get from children, young people and their parents in terms of a difference that we make. It is going to be better in that way. We have already started on the plans for the report for next year. This year as well we had some work to do in terms of the format. It was the first time we had ever done a report, so we had to do some work on the format, and there was a delay with the discussion about how that should be linked to the wider strategy. But we now have a clear format to use, and that will be completed in quarter one next year with much richer data. Our quality assurance manager has already commenced progressing that towards publication.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That is great. That was my next question: will it be ready for quarter one?

**Associate Director, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

Yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

You are saying, yes, it will. I know there was the problems with staff absences and so on before. Have there been mitigations put in place regarding this or is it just the extra staff you have brought in?

**Associate Director, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

Our quality assurance manager has been on parental leave since the summer, and when you are a relatively small service that makes quite a difference. So we have one of our assistant psychologists who stepped up into that role on an interim measure, and which we have recently just extended until next June. He is doing exceptionally well in that role. We have also got a new post. We have got a small amount of additional funding for C.A.M.H.S. coming next year as part of previous Government Plan funding, and we have a business support lead post that we are advertising next week, which is from January. It will be yet another member of staff towards that group of staff, with our data officer and informatics support that work on this. I think historically within C.A.M.H.S. we have lacked some of our infrastructure around analysis of our service, looking at data dashboards, performance, so we can analyse what is happening on a service and individual staff level and make better decisions around practice and initiatives from that. We are in a much better shape than we have been previously.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Also, of course, with the extra demand there has been lately, it is even more important, is it not?

**Associate Director, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

Absolutely.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

The next question I was going to ask was about the work done with the Child Outcomes Research Consortium. Work is still ongoing with this at the moment then?

**Associate Director, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

We have a contract with C.O.R.C., we have a membership. C.O.R.C. stands for Child Outcomes Research Consortium. We have a lead at C.O.R.C. called Lee Atkins who is our regional officer. They have a set of staff of researchers, analysts and experienced clinicians who help advise us in terms of outcome measures. The performance measures we have got in place were all suggested by C.O.R.C. We have something called the C.G.A.S. (Children’s Global Assessment Scale), the current view and goal-based outcomes, which we use on a pre and post-measure to measure progress with children’s mental health. They also suggested we use something called the R.C.A.D.S. (Revised Children Anxiety and Depression) questionnaire. They also helped us introduce the Experience of Service questionnaire, which we did in May this year. Every young person entering our service now completes that as a feedback, and their parents do. We have a growing amount of data in terms of what that is telling us about their feelings, about the difference we are making in their experience with the service and the environment. The other thing that C.O.R.C. provides, as well as suggesting these measures, which are evidence-based measures other services are using, we can submit our data once a year and they will analyse it and produce a report and it will have some comparison with our performance compared to other services in the U.K. (United Kingdom). So that helps us again, it gives us a bit of a benchmark in terms of some of our progress. We have had regular meetings with C.O.R.C. All staff have also accessed some training with C.O.R.C. about how we use and how our staff complete outcome measures and the approach they take when they are using those with children and young people as well. I think this year we have used ... I think we have had a membership for C.O.R.C. for a number of years, but I think this year we have used them a bit more fully than we probably have before. Hopefully that will make a difference, certainly in terms of the report that you see next year, because you will see a lot of the evidence at C.O.R.C., the tools C.O.R.C. has helped us put into place listed in that report.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

I was going to ask about how we would be benchmarking the changes in reports. You have said that this will be done through the C.O.R.C.s. Is that the main way it is really going to be done?

**Associate Director, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

That will help us do in terms of some of these specific measures we will be able to do but we have also recently, a month ago, had our N.H.S. (National Health Service) benchmarking report. We submitted data along with I think it was 117 other C.A.M.H.S. services across the U.K. and a month ago we had our report back. It lists our performance from everything from waiting times and caseloads and staffing levels. It compares them to all the other services in the U.K. We started this week at S.L.T. (senior leadership team). Informatics produced an initial number of slides so we could begin analysing and looking at that. There are a few key headlines, if you would like me to share some of the headlines. Our referral rate is probably quite consistent with other C.A.M.H.S. services in the U.K. Where we are different is that last year we accepted 96 per cent of all referrals to our service. U.K. service is much lower. I think the average was around 78 per cent, so we need to reflect on that and on our current thresholds, because we are also an outlier in terms of a number of children open to us as a C.A.M.H.S. service, which is much higher than other U.K. services as well.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Do you not want to keep that high acceptance rate?

**Associate Director, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

We do, but we also need to make sure that all the universal services that we have in Jersey that have been invested in, such as family nursing, mental health leads in schools, S.E.N.C.o.s (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators), the Y.E.S. (Youth Enquiry Services) project, Mind, young people with lower-level issues are also getting support from the correct environments and we do not end up overwhelming the specialist service, particularly with the growing demands and waiting times. This is not about turning anybody away. It is about making sure that people go down the correct route.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Can I just ask: why do you think there is such a difference in terms of percentages on new referrals from young children in the U.K. compared to Jersey? Have you had a chance to speak about it or maybe to analyse those?

**Associate Director, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

What it is saying is that we are getting very similar numbers coming in. We, as a C.A.M.H.S. service, accept more than other services. A threshold for entry to a specialist C.A.M.H.S. service is much higher in the U.K.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

It is difficult to get seen. In the U.K. much of the activity is actually triaged out and you do not get to see the C.A.M.H.S. service. That is why some people will wait for years to see the C.A.M.H.S. service in some circumstances. We have taken a different approach in Jersey. I think it is the right approach that we have taken. But, as Darren said, we need to prioritise and stratify and make sure you have a risk assessment in the right way.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I think that also during the last couple of years, we have created more services and specialist support in schools, which did not exist before. We trained more mental health co-ordinator support. We have more services around the Island, and this is how you start to do a different way of triaging, because the services are more available within the community. Before they were not there so everyone has gone straight into C.A.M.H.S.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Yes, catch it early.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Yes, and I think it is a better service for children because what has happened historically, and I think part of the reason why some people have fed back that they have not found C.A.M.H.S. helpful is that there have been issues in particular environments, such as schools, and instead of schools contracting with their S.E.N.C.o.s and their in-school support, the referrals have gone to C.A.M.H.S. to do work with the children, which is then very difficult to impact in the environments where there is an issue. We are making sure that the right people are involved on the ground, but certainly there will be nobody turned away from C.A.M.H.S. I am not for one minute suggesting that we are not doing that. But just to make sure the right support is in place in the first place.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

There are some other headlines I think in terms of the female-male split.

**Associate Director, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

Yes, as well. That was a distinct difference but we seem to have a much greater number of females open to us as a C.A.M.H.S. service and other U.K. providers. Most of the U.K. was around 50:50, whereas we were 60:40 dominated. I think we spoke before about the growing number of females that we are having referred with mental health issues, particularly post-age 14, which is a concern.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Do you think boys are being reached enough then properly? I know the Children’s Commissioner has raised some concerns about boys perhaps not being recognised.

**Associate Director, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

Potentially. I think a big number of where our girls are coming through though is in our neurodevelopmental pathway. I see some of that as a positive. A number of years ago, you would have seen a domination of boys for autism and A.D.H.D. (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and girls potentially masking and not being recognised. Last year we were 50:50 in terms of neurodevelopmental referrals so maybe we have a backlog of girls coming through that are finally being recognised. But it is something, again, that we need to look at this data and reflect on. The other key headline, I think the most pleasing one, was we are in the quickest fifth of services across the U.K. in terms of first appointments. Everybody that comes in our service on average has an appointment within 4 weeks and it was 9 in the U.K. and much higher. The graph, in terms of access, we are right at the at the top of the best performing services in terms of access. That is pleasing considering the volume. We have not been in that position historically as well.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That is much better. Is it also much better going on to the next appointment afterwards?

**Associate Director, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

We are nearer the average, and that is largely because we, as a service, include neurodevelopmental assessments in our data, where other C.A.M.H.S. services would be primarily mental health and it would be separate services for neurodevelopmental need. We know that this year we have completed all mental health initial assessments in 29 days. So that is a thorough assessment being done in 29 days. Where we are pushed is completing autism and A.D.H.D. assessments, as we have talked about before. Because those appointments are also included, it is a whole service data, that is why we are nearer the average for that. But we are not performing badly in that figure in terms of the follow-up appointments.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay, great. I have the next question, which was about: will the next report include additional datasets that have not been included before? I know you said there was the additional research behind it, but would that be in the report, the new data about this?

[14:45]

**Associate Director, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

We will include the performance data. The performance data will be included in the E.S.Q. (Experience of Services questionnaire) data. Something else C.O.R.C. provided was a staff survey that looked at staff satisfaction and performance at work and well-being. There may be elements of that that we can include in there as well. The report is going to be much richer than it has been in previous years.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

There are just a few more questions about it. I think you have answered that. Have you received any feedback from key stakeholders in relation to the last report?

**Associate Director, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

Not specifically the last report, but they have been incredibly involved because we have just had our inspection as well. From that inspection, there were surveys completed by a number of stakeholders, including referrers, young people, partner agencies, parents, and there were focus groups during the inspection itself, the on-site inspection. There were focus groups with all of those individuals. While we have not had any comments directly on the report itself, we have continued to have huge amounts of engagement through that inspection and also as part of our collaborative work that we have always tried to do with groups like Youthful Minds, the Youth Parliament and others.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

The inspection that has just been done, that will be published quite soon, I expect, will it not?

**Associate Director, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

We are going to get 2 reports. Because this was a joint inspection between the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the Jersey Care Commission. We had 5 inspectors from the Royal College and one from the Care Commission. On the week commencing 11th December, we get the Royal College of Psychiatrists’ report. Then following that we get in January the Care Commission’s version of the report as well, which obviously will be the one that will be published over here as well. We look forward to receiving that and seeing what the feedback is.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Also our Children’s Services going through the inspection, they are going through the inspection now. So we would have 2 reports at the beginning of 2024.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That is the first time, is it not?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

It is the first time, yes.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

First time since 2019.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Yes, because COVID must have ruined that.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

After four years. So we would have the comparison, what has happened between 2019 and 2023, what is done, what has progressed, where we need to improve challenges. It would be really helpful to build plans going forward. Up to date plans, we do have plans but I think the reports will really inform us if our plans ...

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes, it gives a chance to review everything really, does it not? The panel notes that the 2022 C.A.M.H.S. report included goals for 2023. Will these goals be addressed in the next report and assess to determine whether they have been achieved?

**Associate Director, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

Yes, that can be included. That would be a sensible thing to do. Then setting the goals for 2024, of course.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

I think this is my last one around ... a slightly different one. At the last quarterly hearing, the panel was informed that no further progress had been made with regard to developing a shared prescribing scheme between G.P.s (general practitioners) and clinicians for A.D.H.D. medication. Could you provide an update on the status of this scheme?

**Associate Director, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

Discussions are still taking place. I cannot recall any progress across the line. Partly that is because our service leads have been taken up with the inspection, which has been particularly demanding over the last number of weeks. Toni Cooper, who is our neurodevelopmental service manager, has been tasked with that piece of work, and she is continuing to meet the relevant people. We have discussed that being a priority for her in the coming few months because, as you are aware, we spoke last time about the benefit this would give not only our service but for families in Jersey as well. It is something we are very keen to do but it is taking a little bit of work to get across the line.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

As are we.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I have had a conversation with the Minister for Health and Social Services about this and she is aware and she is supportive. I hope it will be resolved.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Do you have a timeframe for it?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

It is a lot around the primary care decision. It is not always an hour. This is why we need more discussions going with the primary care and expectations and our prescribing. It is one of several things that primary care G.P. needs.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

So we have to keep nagging evidently.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, I think we do, and it is welcome because it is the reason ...

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

We are pretty confident it will show up in the inspection report as well. We know it needs to be done, but it is in the collective of a number of different ways of working with G.P.s and primary care between our department and the Health Department. We need to bring it all together.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay, thank you. That is my questions for the moment. I think that is all our questions to do with C.A.M.H.S. as well.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

So, Darren, if you need to.

**Associate Director, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

Thank you.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

We are moving on to questions about Children’s Services. During the last quarterly public hearing, the panel was informed that the therapeutic children’s home was progressing. Are you able to share any update on this, please?

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes. We have found suitable premises and we have agreed to purchase them. I believe an offer has been accepted.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Offer has been accepted.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

Offer has been accepted.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Subject to planning.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, so our next step is planning. I have seen an overall plan of how the premises could be altered and would make an extremely good centre with spaces both for 3 children and for various rooms in which the therapeutic practice could take place. We have been lucky to find premises like that on the Island.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

We did brief Deputies. We did have a conversation with the Connétable of the Parish. This week our team is engaging with the residents of the properties that neighbour the house, border it. Following this consultation the planning application for change of use will be completed and the survey of the house has been done. At the moment, if everything will go smooth with the residents and the planning, and the change of use will be approved by Planning, we can pursue with the purchase and to start development. Because the plans ... it is internal development. We are not changing anything from outside, so the plans are already in place and hope in 2024 we will see.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

We received a presentation on the building itself and I was personally very impressed; as a bungalow it is ideal so I wish you well with that.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

Thank you.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Next question: in a *Jersey Evening Post* article dated 4th June 2023, it was reported that Jersey had been highlighted by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child for not taking a child’s right-based approach to the placement of the children in care settings off-Island. Please can you advise how you ensure best practices followed regarding the placement of children in off-Island care settings?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Thank you for your questions.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

I think that any child placed off the Island, we consider the child’s interests first. That placement, in effect, outside of Jersey is only a last resort, but it is always where the appropriate level of care that is required can only be undertaken in the U.K. If we look at it, we have, I think, currently 16 young people off-Island; 11 of those are in foster placements. I think I am right in saying that the majority of those are specialist foster placements, where there is a level of care that is required, as well as a foster family.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Or with relatives.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

Or with relatives, yes. Where it is more suitable that they are with relatives off-Island than on-Island. But primarily it is always what is best for the child and where we can have the best possible outcome. These children often have complex needs and I think that needs to be understood, that you are not going to find the facilities that can deal with those complex needs on-Island, nor are you going to have specialists in those areas wanting to come here because they would want ... there might be one child with those specialist needs on-Island because they are all different. This is where you have to make a decision whether keeping them on-Island and not necessarily having the appropriate level of care, or moving them off-Island where they can get that care and return to Jersey when that is completed.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

When it is done.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

There is something really important to raise, as the Connétable raised. It is the last resort and it is the best interest of the child. It has been the court shall not give approval unless it is satisfied. The decision and the scrutiny that is going through the court to place the child or young person off the Island is really robust. We are decreasing numbers off the Island and, with the therapeutic children homes, we are looking how we are bringing some of our children and young people back because we would have a therapeutic children home within a year. We will reduce, but there always will be a requirement. We will never go to zero and that is important. We will do the less. To be honest, since I think this Ministerial team was elected and we had these discussions, we have less than 5; really single number that were placed off the Island. Because any case that consideration is given, it is coming in front of us. Even before it is going to the court and we are asking lots of questions and we are sending back and would like to see the reports. This is what I would like to reassure the panel and the public who are listening, that this is the last resort and we will work to reduce the numbers.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

I think what is very important is it has absolutely nothing to do with convenience or cost. Those are not factors that are considered. What is considered always is what is in the best interests of the child.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

But I just wanted to add, I understand that there will be children who are always going to be best placed off-Island, but I am just wondering if some of those children could be placed with intensive foster carers here if we had more available, and how much work is being done to get more specialised foster carers in Jersey?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I think for the last year we did have campaigns and it is ongoing because for me it is even not just the intensive foster care off the Island, it is important that we will have and we do the training and people going through, people signing in, they need to go through 6 months of training and understanding; what does it mean? If it works for them it is good, but if it does not work it is not. We know that we need to put more emphasis on supporting fostering and adoption because even for the children who are in the children’s homes in Jersey, if we can find more foster families it would be better because I do believe the best option is the foster family. The best option is with the family. The second best is with relatives who can take care and take over the parental responsibilities. The next is really fostering adoption before we are going to.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

May I just come in very quickly? Just to reinforce the chair’s comment that it would be better to keep those children in the Island. One of the really bad situations coming from children who have to leave the Island and needs to be fostered outside the Island, is that if they do not complete their primary school years in Jersey they completely lose their qualifications. Although they may be born in the Island, if they do not complete the primary school years they do lose their qualifications. If they ever want to return to the Island - I am dealing with one case at the moment - they need to do 10 years in the Island, like everybody else.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

No, that is not strictly true. A decision can be made to give them residential qualifications. I think there were some recently. So that is not strictly true.

[15:00]

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

We need to see the case because I do believe ...

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

I think there were 3 recently. Certainly that is something that the law already allows us to do.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

That is really good to know that because what I have got is totally different information.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

Because I was personally involved with one of them.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Please do link in with us.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, link in with us and we can ...

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

From Jersey to Guernsey and back again and has to do 10 years now.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

No, that does not ... no.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

We will take it offline and we will see because it does not sound ...

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

There is a process too.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

In the last hearing, Minister, we were informed about the reciprocal agreement with the U.K. and other jurisdictions. We were told it was advanced at that stage. Could you give us an update on where we are with that reciprocal agreement?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

First of all, I would like to update the process. From 2019, our officers engaged with the U.K. I wrote to Claire Coutinho, Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing in June 2023, asking for her assistance to prioritise this piece of legislative work. She acknowledged our request and agreed that it would be considered as they explore legislative needs across all children and social care. It was reliant on securing Parliament time. Since then, I have worked with the officers and we found that it might be possible just with a Ministerial Decision. On 26th October, I went to London and met with David Johnston, who took over the Ministerial role in 23rd August. I explained the need and prioritisation. We have gone through the paperwork and I sent an updated letter to David on 6th November, which is less than a month ago. We know that it takes between 3 to 4 weeks for Westminster to respond. Our officers are ready to work. We do have all. Our meeting was a very positive meeting. It looks like his office has also responded positively. I just need to give time for the process. But what is really important, and we have discussed that, it is important to have legislative framework in place but the most important is to ensure that our children needs are met when they are in care in the U.K. We do have social workers that are on permanent contact with children because our care orders will still remain our care orders. We are not transferring care orders. What the reciprocal agreements did ... they took me also time to understand. It took me several hours to sit and I also spoke with my counterpart in at Westminster. They are also interested in this, as us, because if, for example, the child got missing from the U.K. and found in Jersey, because we do not have this reciprocal agreement my Children’s Services do not need to act to find this child. We need both of us. From our perspective, we do have agreement with the local authorities. When we are sending a child to the U.K., the local authorities are notified and if the child goes missing, local authorities get involved. We are in more prepared positions. There are not many children coming from the U.K. to Jersey, but we have our procedures on the ground in place. But for the matter of fact, you do need to have formalities, legislative work. For example, they will not have immediate access to the Children’s Commissioner in the U.K., in England. But we do have our advocacy services offer them, and they have access to our Children’s Commissioner. So there are things that can be done better but the matter of our children are safe and everything put in place, it is important to have Government to Government reciprocal for the protocol.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

I cannot say ”reciprocal”, never been able to say it. Very impressed. We just wanted to get a definition on the words “last resort”. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Jersey develop a legislative framework to ensure a child right-based approach and ensure that children are only placed off-Island as a last resort. The panel notes that placement of children in care off-Island is permitted under Jersey law. Please can you advise what steps have been taken to implement the recommendation that it is done only as a last resort?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I think there was some ... not misunderstanding. We do have the Children and Young People (Jersey) Law that was approved in the Assembly in 2022, but this law still has not been enacted and I am bringing the commencing Act in quarter one. Probably I am going to lodge it in January together with the statutory guidance. This law will address the best interests of the child; the best interests of the child mentioned 6 times in this law. The law has been passed. It has not been enacted. This is the legislative difference that will happen in 2024 with enactment, with the Commencement Act of the law. Best interests of the child is part of this law. Even though, to be honest, on a day to day this is what we are doing. We are doing this already. The best interest of the child scrutinised by court when we are presenting to the court. It is not our decision, it is the court’s decision. I think it was a bit kind of what is in place in practice, follow the adoption of the law before the law was actually acted in practice. It is like we are doing C.R.I.A.s. (Child Rights Impact Assessment), some of us, before the law was just acted last sitting.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

I think that is wise. I am assuming we will get some sort of presentation on that.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes. I am just finalising details and you would have a presentation. I thought that we did have a presentation but maybe we need to update the presentation, including why I did not enact the law. Because I felt like we need to have statutory guidance at the same time; the people know what is happening. The statutory guidance is prepared and I am preparing also the training because the professionals need to be prepared. What does it mean in practice when the law is acted? We do have a training in place for professionals as well to prepare.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Perfect. The final question on this topic. Minister, during a quarterly public hearing in March this year, the panel learned about a professional review in relation to social workers will be carried out at a corporate level across government. Please can you update the panel on the status of this review?

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

The professional review of social workers, the intention of this work is to develop a strategic workforce plan for social work on the Island. It is being led by the People and Corporate Services Department. They have been working on plans within that forum, which have included pay and reward, accommodation support, training and development. As I say, it is a review undertaken across departments as part of the workforce development plans. Development of job descriptions for the roles, retention payment for permanent social workers is something that has been introduced. We have negotiated on agency rates to keep Jersey competitive against other areas and ensure that we get the quality of staff that we are looking for. That is the most important thing. You could have people but they are not necessarily the quality that you need. You have to rates of pay that recognise that. We have got internal training and a progression scheme. Then there is the Jersey Social Work Board, comprising of senior representatives from key government and also non-Ministerial and voluntary agencies that meets quarterly to act as a voice for the social workers. That combined approach is how we are developing a workforce for now and the future.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Excellent. We have been concerned in the past about what we regarded as quite a high turnover in social work.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

We have a much higher level of permanent staff now, do we not?

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

We do. We have made some progress. We are not where we would like to be.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

But we are a lot better.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

It is much better than it was at the beginning of the year. What I would say with this work is that we ... I think as a department, we have really had to quickly progress this because we have not quite got the cross-Island and cross-sector board working in the way it needs to. We need to work with people in Corporate Services to get that going. In the absence of that, as the Assistant Minister said, we have had to really take this forward. We have looked at terms and conditions for our social workers. We have looked at retention opportunities, accommodation support, and we have pulled together our training plan. That will be reviewed under the inspection, which we will look forward to the outcome of that. But the bits that are remaining outstanding is that we are ... this is a difficult-to-recruit-to role, and we need it to reflect the Island requirement because if our department is successful but is at the detriment of N.S.P.C.C. (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) or probation or even adult social care, we could be having a detrimental impact in other services. So we want to bring this together so that we have got adult social care represented, our voluntary partners, and we can think of an Island approach to this, building on what we are doing in C.Y.P.E.S. This is not just our department. That is why people in Corporate Services will need to be the lead so that we can align it to a strategic government workforce plan.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

You do not want to be taking key people from other agencies because that is detrimental.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

We need them there as well.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Rob Peter to pay Paul, as the used to say.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Do you have staff shortages at the moment?

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

We do.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

What sort of per cent or what sort of numbers?

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Sixty-five per cent of our staff will be substantive once we convert our most recent appointees. That is, I think, the peak position we are going to get to in 2023. The remainder of the vacancies are filled with agency staff at the moment.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

But at the same time, we are 20 per cent better than we were a year ago. So we were 45, we have gone to 65.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

It must put pressure on those that are full-time?

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, but it is reducing.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

But it is reducing, which is to your credit.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

It is reducing and Jersey does have quite a favourable caseload compared to our U.K. counterparts. Our activity is a bit lower so our workforce whole-time equivalent to the activity is actually quite high. But you are absolutely right, because it is difficult for agency staff to fully understand the system, the process. It does place pressure on the substantive staff.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

It was never going to be a criticism. Actually it is to your credit that you have got so far.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

Caseloads were higher in the Isle of Man as well, as well as the U.K., the caseloads were higher there.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Yes, our caseloads are quite good.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

It is a topic that we have noted over the past and we are going to keep on at you.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

Well, we will keep improving.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

We expect.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Also in our recommendations to last year’s Government Plan, we asked if a pay supplement could be considered for social workers.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

We have.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

We have done the retention payments.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

We have done that. We have done that within Children’s Services. We have a payment retention fee for our substantive social workers existing and those being appointed. We have raised the agency pay rate and we have also provided accommodation support offer as well.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

That is very important.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

It is, but it is a differential to the other groups. We do need to catch that.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, we have been criticised about it.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

I can see that.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Could we have some details just for the panel about ...

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Of course, yes, I can provide you that information.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Thank you.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

My final section is about the review. The terms of reference for the review have been completed. Can you share the detail with the panel, please? In terms of reference, yes.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

It has not been completed by the people in Corporate Services overarching board. As soon as we have that completed we can share that. We need to go back to our colleagues there and get that work going.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

But I think the 6 points that we have done within the department, because whatever we could do on our own without overall I think can be shared with the panel.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Yes.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

What we have done within the department to improve this.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

We would appreciate that, Minister, thank you.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

I am going to ask a few questions around the review of the income support benefit overpayments.

[15:15]

The panel notes that recommendation 7 of the Health and Social Security Panel’s review of income support benefit overpayments recommended that the Minister for Social Security review overpayment processes to “ensure that well-being of the children is considered at every stage”. The panel also noted that the response indicated and again, I will quote: “No action required because the well-being of the children is always taken into consideration in making decisions.” So, Minister, if possible can you please describe the existing practice used to consider children’s welfare as part of the income support benefit overpayment process?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Thank you for your question, but what is really important is that this is part of the Social Security policy and Social Security procedures. I personally do not have involvement with the Social Security policy and procedures.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

I can say that I have referred one case this week, but I do not know what their procedure is for looking into that. I have referred a case where there are children and where no payment has been made and my personal belief is that that overpayment, in this case, should be waived. I have no influence over that. We will have to wait to see. This will go through the process and we will see what the outcome is, but it is a Social Security process.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

I would like to rephrase that. This particular question really veers to the review of the income support benefit that is being undertaken by the Social Security panel so what you are saying is that you have had no involvement in it?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

No. I was not asked for input into this.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

So you have had no input, so that will be my question on that. So we just wanted to establish how the Minister replied that the welfare of the children is always taken into account when decisions are made, and if you had any participation or awareness of this particular review, that the rights of the children are something that really should be considered.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

First, it is important to understand that we are all corporate parents. The Minister for Social Security needs to consider the well-being of the children the same as any other Minister and States Member. The Minister for Social Security has her own personal corporate responsibility for the well-being of the children. It is part of our common strategic policy; it is part of the well-being outcome for the Island in general. I believe that each Minister when they are considering their policies need to take into consideration well-being of the children regardless of if it is the Minister for Treasury and Resources or the Minister for Social Security. I have to believe that the Minister for Social Security does consider the well-being of the children as part of her work and as part of her policy development and part of her response. I can appreciate the problem, that she has some legal issues, which she needs to look at and work with her department to review the policies and, if needed, to bring some amendments to the law. I do not want to comment on the policies and decisions made by another Minister. In saying that, I think for me as the Minister for Children and Education and for Connétable Vibert as a Minister with responsibilities for children’s services, I do believe if the family is facing hardship we do have Family Hub and it is important that it would be brought to our attention through the Family Hub, and this is how we can see how to connect to other departments. I am sure there are different cases and there are different options. I am not sure if I am explaining …

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

We do understand that as a panel. The question was asked simply because this is a quite new recommendation or part of what we need to do now when we bring policies, to care for the rights of the children, and because this review has just come out again we were just asking if you have been involved in checking if there was any … not for you to discuss about the Minister but to see if you had been approached for any …

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I was not asked for input into this.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Okay, thank you, so we will leave that.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

I think the Minister will, as a corporate parent, always consider those. I do not think there is anything to suggest that the Minister would not.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That brings up an interesting thought, that if any of us are failing in our role as a corporate parent then we have to call each other out on this. It is an interesting thought, that is all.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I do not want to make a judgment, because I have not been involved with the policy. I have read what I have read, and if the Minister is saying that the well-being and safeguarding of the children is considered we need to go and …

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

And she will consider it. I am absolutely certain.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

She would consider. It is difficult for me to say …

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

We need to check what that means, yes.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I cannot say that she is not considering.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

No, we are not questioning that. We were just asking if you had any participation and you already said no, so we had better move on.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

It is very important that if there is a policy of the Social Security and as a corporate parent she has the same responsibility for consideration of the well-being of the children as I do. We have a similar responsibility and this is why if something is not considered in her policies it can be …

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Thank you. So my next question, Minister. The panel understands that Jersey has adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child through indirect incorporation into Jersey law. Please could you advise the panel whether it is intended that the U.N.C.R.C. (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) will be fully incorporated in Jersey law?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

As we said during the debate, it is the journey and it is the process. We have still just now enacted it. It is a huge cultural change. The first duty bearers will be us, but we have the second branch duty bearers going to extend to other entities. I think before we are moving forward … to be honest, if you are asking me personally I think we do need to move there. Would it happen within a year or 2? I do not know, because it is a process. It took 6 years from lodging the proposition to bring it to action. Now we are all facing it we might need to do amendments and adjustments, so it will take time, but I think the direction of travel is going there.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

It is reassuring to know that you feel that in time we will be able to incorporate those recommendations.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I am not sure if within my time I will be able to bring legislative change but the direction of travel is good.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Maybe the panel can periodically just ask and see where you are at, at any moment in time.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, sure.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Thank you.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

I have got a section on risk management in school buildings. The panel note from the last quarterly public hearing that 25 risks have been identified in school buildings that will “require further work to provide long-term mitigation.” Please could you clarify the nature of these risks and could you provide an update of the status and an overview of works being undertaken?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Absolutely. First, we did have a second inspection recently and we have also now a fire risk committee and their meeting was on 26th September and the next meeting will be in December to address about the fire risks. We have zero in schools and libraries, however we took 25 for this risk in the process. So some schools, for example, we do not have any more walking watch because the doors were installed. In St. Saviour we did have a walking watch before and now we do not have a walking watch because at all the right sites and right places fire doors were installed and making compartments and evacuation quicker. For example in Grouville School it is no more a walking watch because they reviewed their policy. The policy has been changed and the tolerable risk has gone down.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

There is a question later on, Minister, about walking watch. Have you got any schools now that require a walking watch?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

We do have 4 schools, yes.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

We will catch up with that later on, thank you.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, we do have 4 schools. At the same time, following the current inspection, something else has been discovered and was rectified almost immediately. It was the sprinkler system at Les Quennevais and it has been fixed. What we are trying to say is that the inspection regime will bring us … because things are moving. We did not have a sprinkler system warning at the previous inspection and it came up in this inspection and it has been fixed. So if you had asked me 2 weeks ago I would have more risk because the sprinkler risk just came up. Now the risk does not exist because it has been addressed.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

So we could have perhaps a copy of the report, if you have updated the report?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

We can give you an output from our most recent Fire Risk Committee, if that would be helpful.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

That is great, and does it have timeframes on the report?

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Yes, it does, so for all the intolerable risks they are not sustainable for the long term because they involve people mitigation, so we can give you the detail of where we require, say, capital changes to address that. We can provide that detail for you.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

So we have a question asking whether there is a programme in place … we have got a quote saying a programme in place which would last approximately 12 months. Can you confirm whether this 12-month programme includes the 25 risks identified in school buildings?

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

It does. We anticipate that most of the intensive risk will be resolved within a 6-month timeframe.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Fantastic, thank you. Minister, this is on the walking watch, so I am going to have to rephrase. In any case, it involves staff. Can you confirm how many school staff are currently required to undertake walking watches as one of the fire safety measures accepted by school health and safety inspectors?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

We do not have school staff operating.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

We use G4S.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Oh, I see, so no teachers are involved?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

No.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

I think it would be a stretch to say that teachers would not be involved. There is. So where you have got cover, the school take this really seriously, so we have got a mixture of G4S. School staff will support as well, breaks and making sure that we have always got the walking watch in place. That is why it is not sustainable for a long period of time.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

No, I can see that, so to describe the impact of this requirement on classroom staffing levels it is pretty low, then?

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

It is low, as long as we do not have sickness or other things impacting.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Have you had any feedback from schools about this requirement?

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Yes, the feedback is it cannot be sustained for the long term. We agree and our colleagues in J.P.H. (Jersey Property Holdings) agree as well. It has got to be temporary.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

This is not something that has been withdrawn with regard to the action by teachers.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

No, it cannot because this falls into safeguarding of pupils, so they cannot not do this.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

All right. Thank you very much. Moving on. Minister, the panel notes in response to a 2019 written question that 18 schools in Jersey had asbestos present in their buildings at the time. Please could you provide an update with regard to the number of schools with asbestos present in their buildings currently?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

That is interesting that it is 18, because I do have the number of 19. So I need to see if it is 18 or 19, because this is the number that I have.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

It could be 2018 and 19 schools. Okay, 19, thank you.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

So the service on asbestos is carried out annually, which includes primary, secondary and colleges. There is an asbestos management plan in place for each site and a copy held in each building that gives information about the exact location of any asbestos containing material and how they are being safely managed, either by encapsulation or by removal or by signage.

[15:30]

It is important to understand that not all A.C.M. (asbestos-containing material) that are found need to be removed, like any asbestos fibres being released and assessed, so it is managed through an annual report and where they identify they are labelled, making people aware of their presence. All sites have had their 2023 survey completed apart from Le Rocquier sports hall, Mont Nicolle and First Tower, which is done in December but finishing in December, so all our estate will be completed.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

It is not the presence of asbestos that is the problem; it is whether it is …

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

I think the question is a little bit skew-whiff, yes.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

It is whether any mitigation has been done to remove the risk.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

I have experience with asbestos. If it is left and it is covered it should be …

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

Or there are specialist paints that can be put over it.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

There was an annual budget apparently that was allocated for the removal of asbestos prior to any refurbishment work being undertaken. Presumably that still exists. Can you advise whether the budget continues to be allocated for the removal of asbestos in school buildings?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, it is in general expenditure that we do have and, for example, we had recently, I am not sure if you know that La Sente Primary was relocated from the building into the portacabin because of the fire concerns. You are welcome to visit. They are very happy with their new arrangement. It is much better for them, but what has happened is that there were some actions recently required, because the building was vacated some time ago. The building has not been in use since the break for the summer holiday and some encapsulation and cleaning work was needed in the basement. We continued to monitor it but something was discovered in use and it has worked, so the basement was locked and the work will be completed within the next week, so we do have budget and we do monitor.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Do you have an annual budget and, if so, how much is allocated each year?

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

It is under the general head of expenditure for maintenance and ongoing support. I can get the figure to you.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Or we can supply it afterwards.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

But there is sufficient there for emergencies?

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

There is and if we have an exceptional event, so think about the damage with Storm Ciarán for example, then we go back to the Treasury Department to seek additional support.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I think we are supported. Our general capital and maintenance and everything. It is not about the budget. It is about capacity and the need but the emergency support must be done. We do have that support.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

One last question on that. The panel further notes that in 2019 Jersey Property Holdings had: “… placed all relevant staff on asbestos awareness training and is confident that they have the appropriate knowledge and expertise to be able to recognise and manage the potential presence of asbestos.” Please can you advise whether relevant staff continue to receive asbestos awareness training?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

From my understanding, yes. That is what I have been told. I do not have the details of training, how many times, but if you would like, I will find it.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Which staff are considered to be relevant staff?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Staff who are working on the maintenance of the school, the general maintenance. I may have it. So I do not have exact numbers around asbestos of the C.Y.P.E.S. staff who received training, so I am happy to provide more details.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Okay, and how is the process of delivering asbestos awareness training managed in relation to turnover of staff and induction of new starters? Is it a priority when somebody new comes along?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I need to get back to you with this information.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Moving on. At the last quarterly hearing, Minister, the panel learned that a review of the presence of R.A.A.C. (reinforced autoclave aerated concrete) in schools in Jersey would take place with a report produced by the end of October. Can you confirm whether this review has been concluded and, if yes, what were the review findings and recommendations and, if no, what timescale for the completion of the review?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I personally have not seen the full report, but I have been told there is no R.A.A.C. found at Jersey schools, so probably this is the reason that I did not see the report. I have had it confirmed by officers that R.A.A.C. has not been found in Jersey schools.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

So have you not inspected Le Rocquier School and sports hall yet? Is that not right, from the last few questions?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

No, it is for the asbestos.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Oh, I beg your pardon. Okay, that is fine.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Asbestos is now coming through. It is asbestos. It is not R.A.A.C.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

So, sorry, is that a definite no R.A.A.C. in schools?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I have been told, and it is in writing, that R.A.A.C. has not been found in Jersey schools.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Who does the inspections for R.A.A.C.?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Jersey Property Holdings.

**Assistant Minister for Children and Education:**

It would have been highly unlikely to find any because I do not think any Jersey building firm ever used it. I think the one case where there was some in a government building was an external contractor.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Minister, following the disruption to schools caused by Storm Ciarán on 1st November, the panel notes that the gov.je website states that: “Schools that remain affected due to storm damage are Samarès School and Hautlieu School.” Please could you confirm whether Samarès School and Hautlieu School continue to be affected by damage from Storm Ciarán?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

The schools are open and operating. Some internal repairs need to be done but it is not affecting the learning process. For example, the library at Hautlieu School was substantially damaged but they wanted to do a new library and I heard that a year ago, so it is a space where young people can come and learn, so they arranged different areas and this area needs to be redesigned and repaired.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Was there much impact on staff and students at the schools at the time?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

It was an impact in the first week because especially around Hautlieu it did take a week to fully reopen, but at least with Hautlieu the children are older and engagement is online work, and online it is easier than with the primary. The primary at Samarès, they have done as much as they could and are being really creative and they used the youth club hall as well and all children received hot meals even though they did not have full-time education and they did have engagement at least once a day. It was challenging but it is operating.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

To help the public who are listening, could you describe how disruption to education through the closure of schools was managed during Storm Ciarán? I know that you used some outsourcing premises at some stage, for Samarès, I think.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Absolutely. Both schools put mitigation in place with Hautlieu receiving online and the learning support centre remains closed and this is what needs to be done. Samarès School was opened partially to reception and year one students for the first week and was inventive in offering some face-to-face teaching and interactions with students, utilising community space and the youth and community centre before opening on 12th November.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

I think it is my turn again. I am going to ask the Minister some questions about the youth centre and what is happening. Regarding the development of purpose-built youth facilities in the north of town, you will recall that £4.25 million is set aside for the project. Please can you provide an update on the development of purpose-built youth facilities in St. Helier?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

This panel is aware absolutely that we have for years been challenging to find a suitable site for a youth and community centre in St. Helier. Officers also this week had meetings and they are exploring options and working with their colleagues from J.P.H. to review currently a possible 3 options. The prefeasibility is on the way. I need to receive hopefully early in 2024 preplanning advice about options. Nelson Street is still an option but I think there are other better options available that have come to the market and we are exploring them. I am sure that you are also aware that there are other services that we need to find support for, better premises such as C.A.M.H.S. We have Y.E.S. service. We have the Jersey Music Service that require new facilities. All of them are connected to youth and if there is a place to bring this together … I think to be honest I am much more optimistic today than I was 3 months ago because the options that are currently on the table mean we will be able to progress because the options before were more difficult. Again, my officers would complete with J.P.H. this prefeasibility and preplanning advice in the beginning of the new year. I cannot talk about specific sites because it is …

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

I get that, so would you please be able to tell us if the £4.25 million is still allocated for that youth centre project?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I am not sure of the exact figure but we probably would require more than what was allocated if we are bringing it together.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Do you think you would get that?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

It is a different way of funding it and there are different funding models because if it will incorporate several services …

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

You can amalgamate them?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Thank you for that, Minister. The panel note the allocation of funding in the Government Plan 2023-2026 and 2024-2027 for the expansion of the Youth Service. Please can you advise how the funding allocated for the expansion of the Youth Service will be directed towards the development of the new St. Helier youth centre? I already understand that you are not so sure whether the £4.25 million still stands at this point in time.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

No, we do not have £4.25 million but what we have is … I do not have the Government Plan in front of me, because if it were specifically for St. Helier … because I know that we had £2 million for St. Helier at the beginning, because we do have Le Squez Youth Centre. When we are talking about the Youth Service, for me St. Helier is important and we do need to have in central St. Helier a youth service, but we also have … and it has progressed, redevelopment of the Le Squez Youth Centre connected to the Samarès School where the need is also very high and it will incorporate different other services. It will be developed as a community and youth centre and some of these funds are going there. Also we do have on our plate St. Aubin for an upgrade, which is also part of the capital plan for the Youth Service. What is really important is we need first … there is no need to hold the money for me in 2024 when we know that the physical build will probably start in 2025, because we need to go for the feasibility, we need to put the plans in, we need to go through the planning and it does take around a year. This is where we are going to tender, we understand how many funds we need, the business plan and will report forward.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Thank you. You did say there are various sites involved but you obviously do not know exactly which one is going to be …

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Because one of them will be cheaper, one of them will be more expensive, one of them is a government portfolio, one of them may be in a Parish portfolio, one of them on the private market. It is really important for me what we need to ensure this is the best and quickest option for us, and enough to build a business case around it.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

So can I please try to narrow it down a little bit? Do you think that by the first quarter of 2024 you will have at least an idea which site? I believe that is what you mentioned earlier, options that will be taking place in the first quarter?

[15:45]

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I hope by the end of 2024 I will have an idea …

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

End of 2024?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

No, Q1 of 2024 I would settle on the site. It might be still like as happened with the therapeutic service for children how they identified a site in the summer. We need to go through the negotiation. The negotiations took some time but we settled on the price and now we are going to the planning and only planning going forward we will progress with the purchase. It depends on which building we will decide to progress forward, I will have plans, what is the next steps.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Thank you. We will come back to you then after …

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, sure, it is important.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Thank you.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

I just want to add one more question about youth clubs, we were trying to look at what youth clubs were available in Central St. Helier and there is the Move On Café, which I think is mainly outreach services and a café.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

No, Move On, it is open and it is drop-in.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

I could not see there was any other drop-in youth clubs for central St. Helier at all, could you confirm that there is nothing else for central St. Helier?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

No, central St. Helier …

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

There is the St. James Centre but that would be scheduled activities.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That is different, that is not a drop-in centre.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Yes, the Move On site is where we would have our drop-in service.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

But there is nothing else, just that one, the whole of town?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

What is drop in? Drop in when children come and they participate?

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Yes.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

The Youth Service at St. James, they have lots of activities in St. James. You have multilingual learners group running from there, you have C.A.R.A.S. (Community Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers) running from there, they have other groups running from there. You have arts from there …

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Yes, they have specific activities that take place in St. James but it is not the same as a youth club where children will attend, say, 2 or 3 times in the evening and that is the space …

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

We are concerned about that because for the north of St. Helier and so on there is nothing for children.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

No, not St. Helier, we do have First Tower.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

The north of St. Helier, like up at St. Mark’s Church area and so on …

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Central St. Helier.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

… there is nothing for children in that area.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

I think we hark back to the days when probably St. Helier had a good 6 to 8 youth clubs that were open for all sorts of activities for people under the age of 18 and including music, table tennis, pool, all sort of things, yes.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

We do have music.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

There is not enough to do and I think that is our pressure point.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

There is nothing for children to go along to a youth club, meet their friends in a non-organised way for most of St. Helier ... for most of central St. Helier in town.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Central but this is the point, we need …

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

When we were checking up on that we were quite surprised.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

No, I think it is a priority and it is important this. I am not trying to … I think, as a Deputy before becoming a Minister, I was comparing it and said we need a youth centre for central St. Helier.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

But would you agree that we need it more than ever now because the amount of buildings we have seen taking place in St. Helier only indicates to one thing, there will be more people moving into St. Helier …

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Absolutely.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

… and children being raised here. It is important that these children have somewhere to go and those facilities are in place. Like the chair said, we looked into that and the numbers are quite worrying. There is a priority on that youth centre.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

I think we have to be clear about what the drop-in is going to be because you are right in the context of the Move On being the main area of activity. But the activity is really inconsistent and so our principal youth officer is looking at the model because if we are going to have additional sites which are open for people to just drop into, we need to know that they are going to be accessed, they need to be what young people want. I think there is something to look at with that and I think the model needs to be reflective of how we are going to attract people to use that. If we are targeting older children particularly, that is a difficult to attract to area for just dropping in. I think we do need to learn from what we have seen in the Move On Café, in all honesty. It can be very busy, it can be not busy, it can have the same children who use it all of the time and we do need to diversify that and it needs to be a bit different.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That would be good but basically just sort of anything might be good; we have quite a lot of children. If I can move on to the subject of school uniforms. The panel noted the survey that was open to parents and carers for children during the school in 2024; that closed on 20th October. Please, can you confirm whether the results of the survey have been analysed?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes. We did have 588 responses across primary and secondary schools, including J.C.G. (Jersey College for Girls) and V.C.P. (Victoria College Preparatory College); 55 per cent of parents were either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with the current cost of uniform. The majority of parents are spending between £100 to £200 on the school uniform per year. The majority of parents advised they felt there were too many branded uniform items and believed there should be only one or 2 items of branded clothing for the main uniform, one or 2 items for the P.E. (physical education). As 410 parents, the majority of the parents advised that they were able to shop around for non-branded and non-compulsory items. What was really worrying - and we need to see what we are doing more - because 70 per cent of parents were not aware of schemes available to help with the purchase of a uniform, such as a government scheme for secondary or the Variety Club for primary.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That is quite an interesting response then, yes.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes, this was very interesting. The kind of response that we said there is a report that 70 per cent of parents were not aware.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Will the results be published?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I am not entirely sure. They were shared with the headteachers. I am not sure that they were published. Again, 588 responses, I would say it is really low numbers of responses, even though I have gone through the social media. It has been published because we do have thousands of children at schools. What we are doing now, there are several schools doing the similar survey within schools because when we had done this survey we still were in dispute with the headteachers and obviously the survey, some of them had gone through the school, some of them not. Now we can have the schools’ headteachers finally engaging, we are working together. Some of the surveys would go through different schools again to understand because in any way the future with the new policy that will be presented by the end of this year, the school leaders, headteachers will have a role to play because they would need to engage with parents, they would need to engage with children, they would need to engage with their school community to develop their updated policy for the school; how implementation would go into schools.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes. You will be speaking to the headteachers as well then but there was an intention to implement new measures by September next year?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Do you think that is still achievable?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

What we are having - and this was a long, long, long conversation - but the implementation period will be from September 2024 over 3 years. Why it is important to do this implementation period is because if one of the parents bought a uniform in January and the uniform is still fine in September, I would not like that the parent will spend extra money or at the same time suppliers still have their stock and we do not want it that suppliers will lose funds. The moment that stock is sold, it is going out. We do need to have for the suppliers, for the parents, for the teachers to have this 3-years’ implementation. But what is important is that the new policy will be defined. We are talking about I can indicate which way we are going, we have discussed it. We will call them bespoke because we are going to be completely lost between branded and compulsory. Because for me you do need trousers or you need a suit, it can be a black suit. Is it compulsory? You do need to have the uniform and because the definitions were not clear, we now are moving to bespoke items and it will be up until the …

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay. Those survey results will help shape the policy and …

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Absolutely, yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes, okay, that is great and I think that is all from me at the moment.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Also, I met with the J.C.R.A. (Jersey Competition Regulatory Authority) yesterday and they will advance and provide an additional tender and advice to schools because they said that one of their recommendations that once in 5 years it will be tendering, not for every school because if you have one form entry it is different but if you have bigger schools and the J.C.R.A. is supporting us with that and it will be addressed. They need to send me an updated version and it will be all circulated to schools.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay, thank you.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Yes, I think the uniform topic is all about clarity and the communication is very important. Minister, I am going to move on to teacher strikes.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I have some updates. I just had a meeting with N.A.S.U.W.T. (National Association of Schoolmaster Union of Women Teachers) and just finished our talk before I came to you. We are working together. It is Education Department, S.E.B. (States Employment Board) and unions. I think that our meeting felt positive. Again, there is something they offer with the unions, they need to go through their processes. I do not know what will be the outcome. I hope for the outcome that can move us forward. There is also intense work on the terms and conditions because it is not just about … as I said in the States Assembly, there is a pay but I think much more important it is the terms and conditions. It is important at the same time because you have cover, is the cover protected or not protected? This is what we need to discuss. We need to discuss time for teachers to be able to do their C.P.D. (continuing professional development). They need time for their planning. There are complexities and there are different complexities in different schools and we need to address that some schools have more complexities than others and if there is a place for the supplements for specific jobs in specific areas because there are differences. We do have a working group that are working on the terms and conditions because education demand and education work within schools changed over the last years. It needs to be reflected in the terms and conditions, which obviously will be reflected at wages.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Thank you. My question was predominantly about the N.E.U. (National Education Union) but thank you for that update on the N.A.S.U.W.T.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I met N.A.S.U.W.T. because I did have a meeting with N.E.U. a couple of weeks ago.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

That is what I was going to discuss.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I did have a meeting with N.E.U. and I had a meeting with N.A.S.U.W.T. today. S.E.B. met with most of the unions, I think, almost daily this week. Let us just hope that we can find a way forward.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Common ground, yes. When do you anticipate that the outcomes of these discussion between Government and all the unions be finalised and published?

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Once an agreement is reached.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

It is agreements reached. I am waiting for responses, there is an offer and we need to see how the national unions because obviously it is all going from Jersey to U.K. …

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

It is going to come back again.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

… and coming back and it is getting extra …

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

I know how you feel, I was in the C.W.U. (Communication Workers Union) for 23 years, so we are all very aware of that. During the States Assembly debate on 28th November, the one we have just had, in response to a question about whether the teacher pay offers will be taken from school budgets, the chair of the States Employment Board advised that: “This was a matter for the Minister for Children and Education.” Please, could you confirm that you intend to allocate funding for teacher pay offers from school budgets?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Okay. First of all, not from school budgets. I think I did mention this, the school budget is the school budget is the school budget. The offer that is currently, I understand, on the table, we have a corporate, how will you say it, body for the pay awards?

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

The pay award.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

When we offered, so, for example, for the headteachers, it is something that came out from the Education Reform Budget but it was a budget that we held centrally. We have 80 per cent of the budget going to schools and we still have 20 per cent budget centrally.

[16:00]

We need to decide, what is the best way to make sure that we are meeting the objectives of the reform? We might use some of the budget that we have for the supplement but for specific work that needs to be delivered to make sure that inclusions are reform. Because there are, as I said, complexities within the schools and when I have schools with, say, only 33 children that do not have any of the characteristics for the complexity out of the whole school, we are talking about a small percentage eclipse and obviously this school would require more investment.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

I am sure you understand that the panel were concerned about the fact that this may have been coming from a school budget.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

No, it is not coming from the school budget.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

No.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Please, can you confirm where this funding will be provided from; what you are saying is this particular budget you have described?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

There is a pay offer from S.E.B. for … you would probably explain it better.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

It would be repurposing our growth allocation. The school budget is the school budget and the school budget has to be protected because our whole funding formula was to address any structural deficit within school budgets, which we have done. Our approach under the next Education Reform and inclusion is to address intensity, complexity, where you need additional roles and functions. The pay award will be centrally funded and so would any terms and conditions review. But where the department has to also be considered and where we also need to be in dialogue is where we are needing teachers or staff to work differently and where we would need then to consider when we fund that and how that would be met. The department and the States Employment Board have to come together for that part and, in that circumstance, you could see where there are different budgets allocated. But that cannot be to the detriment of the school fiscal year budget.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

That was our concern; I am sure you understand that.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

That is why it is important that we got to a good position with school leaders because we need school leaders to help us to think about how do we address the demands and the challenges. We know we have got intensity challenges within the school. We know we need to do something about cover arrangements; that causes a particular challenge. Those things are likely to affect hours and the work arrangement for the teaching staff; that would come from our budget.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Okay.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

That is where we need to look at our residual value of funding outside of the core staffing and think: do we need to think about that differently? That is what we want to do with the unions and school leaders and teachers going forward.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Okay.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Minister, is it still the case that headteachers’ budget their own schools based on a formula of numbers of pupils?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

No, the formula is much more complex.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Okay.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I published a year ago and I am happy to share this again because you have some roles that are paid full-time, regardless of how many children and after you have the children …

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

In the multiple.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

… in the month and after you have also extras for a different type, for example, if a child was wrong, you have extra support. You have a child with special education needs, you have extra support. But you have on top roles, for example, S.E.N.C.o. you have funds for a full-time special education needs co-ordinator, regardless.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Then there is money for Jersey Premium.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Jersey Premium and M.L.L. (Multilingual Learners), so the formula is much more complex than it was before and this is why the school budgets, most of the schools have higher budgets than it was previously.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Okay.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Is that still progressing or is it done now?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

No, it is a review.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

It is live.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

It is live, yes.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

It will have variation.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

This is why we said when we see schools with more complexities we need to consider the staffing there. We might have more teaching assistants in specific schools, depends on the ratio compared to other schools.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Yes, absolutely.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Thank you.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Thank you. All yours, Connétable.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Is it back to me?

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes, I think so.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Okay, where am I?

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

School meals, is it not?

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

School meals …

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

You are going to make me hungry.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Surprise, surprise.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

I have lost my place now.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

It is 33, Marcus.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

I could not see it, I need my glasses, I have got it. I beg your pardon, Minister. Thank you.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Okay, we are good.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

The panel notes that the next phase of the school meals programme was announced in September this year with plans to extend the provision of school meals in all government-maintained primary schools by September 2024. Please, could you provide an update in relation to the school meals programme and have you collected feedback from students and parents and carers about the meals programme?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Thank you for your question. First of all, we are on target for September 2024 and I do have good news, I am not sure if I said it around the panel or I said somewhere that, first, an extra 3 schools were added in September but we are planning other schools to come in April. I am bringing 2 schools forward and I will have an extra 2 schools, hopefully, opening in January after Christmas and New Year. The 2 schools that should, if all according to the plan but it may be one week later, it depends, we need some electricity and some work during the Christmas; it is Bel Royal and d’Auvergne and d’Auvergne is one of the biggest schools that we have. These 2 schools are coming earlier than expected, we expect them in April but because we started to work in a different model it feels that we can do it earlier.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

But you think January, did you say?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

January 2024, yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes, great.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Really hope that I do not have any surprises. Also, we started a free fruit programme and currently it has been delivered in January in Springfield and Plat Douet and it is going really well. On top of the meals we have a free fruit programme and we would like to extend it. We work together with the Public Health. They did have surveys and collected feedback. I do not have feedback in front of me - I am happy to share - but the feedback was really positive for me. The 2 new schools that came on board, which was Springfield and Plat Douet …

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Plat Douet and Granville.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Granville but in Plat Douet and Springfield at least I know - because it was the latest figures presented to me and I visited Springfield myself to speak with children - we have 70 per cent, it is a highest percentage uptake that we had.

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Yes, it is really good.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

It is going really good.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

It will be an indication of the type of families you have got around that area as well for taking on that.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes. We also changed a bit the menu. Yes, I think that we have more of a type of spaghetti bolognese and no chickpea, cauliflower or curry.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Where can we get that?

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

He is going to salivate now.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

It was amazing that what was done that it was different and some of them had omelettes with vegetables and some of them had, when I visited, I think lasagne on that day with vegetables and some had vegetarian. We started to give bigger portions for the child but it was amazing that when I was at Springfield School the staff ... it was important really to develop staff connections with the children. They are going: “Would you like more?” Some of them liked more of this, some of them liked more of that and some of them eating 2 big portions during the lunch, which is really healthy and it is really good. I think it would be good if you …

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

We would love to.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

We would love to see that, absolutely.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

We would like to, yes. Can we make it a spaghetti bolognese day?

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Can we go now, please?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

The most favourite day is Wednesday; it is the roast dinner time.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Okay, Wednesday it is then. Okay.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay, noted.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

We have had great feedback, good programme but we note that there is building works for a couple of the schools.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Rouge Bouillon and First Tower, for example, how is that going, those are on track?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes. Architectural, mechanical and engineering drawings for Rouge Bouillon, St. Saviour and First Tower are working. I visited First Tower, I think, 2 weeks ago or last week; I do not remember. I visited recently and we discussed options because it is an old building and there are restrictions. But they do have options and I hope that it will be signed by the end of the year. It will progress, some of them need to progress to the planning but we would have enough time to do the building work over the summer.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Eleven out of 10, Minister, thank you.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Absolutely.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Over to you, Mark.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

It is Catherine next I think, the chair.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Catherine, I beg your pardon.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay, yes. My questions are about the P.S.H.E. (Personal, Social and Health Education) curriculum. The Jersey Youth Parliament asked for an improved P.S.H.E. course and that work is underway on this. Could you provide an update on the development of the curriculum?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes. First of all, all recommendations from the Jersey Youth Parliament were all incorporated in the P.S.H.E. curriculum. I have been presented some months ago with a table that it was really good to see because it was in yellow, everything that the Jersey Youth Parliament suggested, and I could track that everything that was suggested was incorporated and it was more. We consulted with local organisations and charities. We have gone back to the Youth Parliament and presented to them an updated draft. It received the final ratifications of the Jersey Curriculum Council on 30th November, basically yesterday. It has been ratified and it will go live incorporated in schools from now on.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That is great. I remember they wanted - I have got a note here - things like money management and stuff like that.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

It is great. As we did have a few parents get in touch with us to ask whether parents are informed about the content of P.S.H.E. curriculum because sometimes they have some concerns …

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

The P.S.H.E. curriculum is published, obviously it is available. If parents have some specific concerns about some part of the curriculum it will be really important to get in touch with the school. I am sure that headteachers would respond and if parents have followed the communication with the headteacher, they always can come to the department and speak with our curriculum …

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

As a first step they have to speak to the headteacher?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I think it is the first step to the headteacher and I would not think that the headteacher would not respond to their concerns and will not explain.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

When you say it is published, is that available online now?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I am not sure if they have gone online, I need to check because it was just ratified, probably it will be …

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

It is just ratified …

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Like yesterday.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay. To what extent does the P.S.H.E. curriculum deal with issues related to mental health and suicide prevention, which we asked about before as a panel?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Okay. What was taken into account is we took … when we looked at the curriculum we took into account the U.K. suicide prevention strategy, N.I.C.E. (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) guidelines and research from the University of Manchester’s *Suicide by children and young people in England* report. Also, the Jersey suicide prevention strategy is currently being finalised after going into the public consultation in May 2023. The guidance for schools and colleges place significant emphasis on development of self with building resilience, signpost of the children to different agencies. What will be the areas that we will look at and will be learning, it is around stigma discrimination and judgmental attitude, understanding of loneliness, emotion and feeling of recognition, bereavement, on and offline bullying, social media pressure and influence, gambling, moral and low education, drug and alcohol abuse. What we are thinking, and it is a package that through the Educational Psychology Service will be also available. We have had a good discussion how we can work with schools because it is not specific to suicide; it is about the things that can lead to that. We are currently working with Thrive Jersey through Jersey Suicide Prevention Alliance project to evaluate a proposal funded by the Jersey Community Foundation in collaboration with Kezia’s Fund to train staff and young people to act as advocates and to be a sufficient confidant in opening a conversation about the suicide. Initial exploration has been taking place with the leaders and I will have a round-table discussion, which I will also be part of it, on 8th January to consider this further.

[16:15]

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

We need to work together, what the curriculum and what the themes and in which parts will be included to make sure that we are working to the current …

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That discussion for 8th January; that would be with Thrive Jersey and the Kezia’s Fund.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay, great.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Also, representing …

**Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:**

Y.E.S. and C.A.M.H.S. colleagues.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Y.E.S. project and represent C.A.M.H.S., yes, the rights they call this around.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay. Right, okay. Thank you. I think that is my questions.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Review of sport and physical activity in Jersey is my section, Minister, following the publication of the report *Review of Sport and Physical Activity in Jersey*, the panel noted that the Government response to this review which states that and I quote: “The Minister for Children and Education is very supportive of the recommendation regarding improving provision for school sport and P.E., particularly in local primary schools.” Please, can you confirm whether you intend to implement all 4 of the measures provided for under recommendation 16?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I am going to work with this, yes. From my perspective, we are working already on the new curriculum and physical education literacy. The Curriculum Council, it is part of their work and we should complete it in 2024. We need to look into the school partnership model. We need to establish multi-school champions and, to be honest, I am on top of this. I personally would like to see P.E. teachers in primary schools, maybe we will need to work out a model, maybe it will take a bit longer than a year because some schools have a really strong P.E. curriculum because they have one of their teachers are strong and a P.E. teacher in the qualification. Some schools, most of the teachers are generalists and they are doing their best and they are doing really good, as much as they could. But I believe introducing P.E. teachers would give, first of all, proper P.E. education and training for the students and also generalist teachers, they can have time. When we are talking about terms and conditions, what needs to be delivered by professional specialists in the area, and I believe if it is music, if it is art, if it is P.E., depends on what is your passion. On top of this recommendation I would like to explore more.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

More, that is excellent. Any particular timeframe for implementing this, do you think?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

The P.E. teachers I will say a couple of years, yes, I would not think it is … because there are several things that I can implement immediately and I will concentrate, as the report suggested in 2024, and see how we progress. I need also to understand where is the workforce, what are the requirements. Maybe we will do pilots before we progress.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Okay, thank you.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Thank you. Minister, I have got the Government Plan. The panel notes that the Government Plan 2024-2027 provides for and I quote: “Investment in young people workforce participation, which will consolidate all current provisions and services working to reduce the number of young people without a destination after finishing full-time education.” Please, can you confirm whether these provisions and services include support for young people employed on apprenticeships?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Thank you. It does and I know that it was a recent conversation. If you all remember, I can see who voted around this room, if I am looking we all voted for the trainee minimum wage rate should be harmonised with the main minimum wage rate by the way of Ministerial Order, so 41 States Members, all of us in this room voted for this.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes. I do think though we were hoping that research had been done into it and there was support …

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Not all.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Sorry, apology, the Connétable of Grouville.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

I thought there would be support available if things did not work well, yes.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes. What was raised through the debate that it might be unintended - apology, Connétable, I included you - consequences. To be honest, it is one case that came to our attention and support is available. The person can continue study through Highlands and work with our tracker. Personally I responded and I said there is a person and we will continue to support. But we need to understand that we will need to manage it going forward.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Just to clarify, my primary concern at the time was: would it put a potential employer off having an apprentice? But now that you have mentioned there is support available, that was what I was thinking about.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

They mentioned support and the apprentice to find now a new employer and as their course fees are paid by the tracker, there is no reason for them to stop attending the college.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Can I just ask, has that communication been passed on to businesses who employ the apprenticeship youngsters? Are they aware of that?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

They should be from my understanding, yes, but I am happy to double-check with my officer who is responsible for the apprenticeship.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

I think that could be an idea because I think the query that came out of a member of the public, it felt like neither the employer or the parent was aware that extra support would be available.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

No. The employer needs to meet the employer’s obligation. We are looking into the apprenticeships on our side because currently some employers do not pay a single penny for the training, apart from the wages.

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Okay.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Okay. The employer paying the wages but they are not paying for their course for the training at Highlands. There are some employers that did not put in paperwork on time, they are paying for the course and paying wages. The system needs to change and I am working on changing the system. But on that particular …

**Deputy B.B. de S.DV.M. Porée:**

Scenario, yes, we talked about.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

… scenario that we had in front of us, from my understanding and from what I have been told because I have done it literally within 48 hours and look around, that the course was paid by the tracker and just wages was deployed.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Can I just follow up on that?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

I have been aware from time to time that occasions where an apprentice’s day off would be the day he or she might have to go to college. Are we sure that apprentices have a day off which is free to them and another day free to go to Highlands College or wherever they receive their training to make sure they have time away?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I need to check this. I am not sure about the exact day off arrangement and schools.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

It could be a bit of a hole in there, yes. Okay. Just following on from that, Minister: what impact has the proposition Trainee Minimum Wage, as amended, to integrate trainee minimum wage rates into a single minimum wage rate for employees of school-leaving age and above had on young people employed on apprenticeships in Jersey?

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I am not sure because I am looking through the … generally from my understanding from the Jersey Employment Trust and Jersey Employment Group, it did not have a resistance because they feel that there is a way forward. Probably will have an outcome or not outcome in 2024 because it starts from January 2024. We will see the response from the industry when they will work through this. I did not have any specific feedback either way up until now.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Okay. It is more relevant, I think, the next question: what feedback has been provided by young people and employers about the support offered to young people employed on apprenticeships? For example, one would assume that apprentices are delighted but employers may have some reservations because of the cost.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Most of the feedback that I received that anyway in day to day they are already paying more and it is not far away from the minimum wage. Because most of the trained employers paid above minimum wage to make sure it is the employee market. The Chamber of Commerce indicated that the trainee rates now have little relevance in either the retail or hospitality sector. I am just reading through the feedback. But for me we need to see how it is really working out in 2024 when employers … I believe that it was welcomed by the apprentices because they would receive a minimum wage. If we are thinking about year one it was £7.87, the year 2 was £9.19. From January 2024 all trainees will receive minimum wage of £11.64.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

It is just that we would love to keep in touch with this programme and get regular feedback because we are quite keen about this one.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

I think that we will have a meeting with you and I will ask for a brief from you before we will go and publish. We are reviewing apprenticeships’ subsidy in general because, like I said, it was very unequal between different employers, depends what time they are applying. Some of them get 100 per cent subsidy and some of them did not get any and it needs to change.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

Yes, indeed.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Thank you, Minister.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Okay. I think that Skills Jersey said they are reaching out to all the apprentices to see if this is affecting them at all.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

There are a few hundred, are there not? There are quite a few hundred.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

Yes. The Skills Jersey mentors are in touch with them and we will see …

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Anyone who finds themselves in a difficult position with this should get the support that they need.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

If somebody finds themselves in a difficult position, please get in touch with Skills Jersey with mentoring and we will find … I always believe there is a way forward. If one employer decided to get out of the market we will always have other employers who would be welcoming and I am sure that we can find a solution. It is really important to get in touch and continue to communicate with us.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Thank you, all right.

**The Connétable of Grouville:**

I think that is it.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Yes, that was our last question. We had finished a few minutes early.

**The Minister for Children and Education:**

A couple of minutes. Thank you.

**The Connétable of St. Clement:**

Thank you.

**Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

That is it. Thank you very much, that is us done then.

[16:28]