

What is required for the effective delivery of Early Years Education and care with particular regard to the needs of the following:

a) The Children

In my opinion the needs of the child should be the most important consideration. Under fives deserve high quality care and education - this means that the learning environment must be of high quality, inside and outside. The staff responsible must be well qualified and have a good understanding of child development, and there must be age appropriate delivery of a well structured curriculum. The children's sense of wellbeing should be core to the provision. There should be continuity of care so that those children who require longer days are given this in a setting where the adults and environment remain the same.

b) The Parents

The parent's needs should be addressed by an effective and inclusive partnership with the care/education provider. Ultimately a child is the parent's responsibility and they are the child's first teacher. Setting should encourage dialogue, communication and exchange of information about activities and learning opportunities. Parental opinions and expectations should be included in the development of the nursery 'philosophy' or ethos.

Parents should be informed about the differences in the types of provision and access to the most appropriate setting for the needs of their child should be made clear.

I believe that sometimes the needs of working parents - to work longer hours, through school holidays are not always in the best interest of very young children. Businesses should be encouraged to enter into 'family friendly' practice - flexible working arrangements - and some of the biggest financial institutions - of which Jersey has many - should be more pro-active on entering into partnerships with education and care providers - as in Reggio Emilia in Italy. Politicians should also consider the responsibilities industry has towards society - working parents and their families.

c) The Providers of Care and Education

The support of well qualified staff in a wide range of different settings.

Continuing resources at a high level to ensure quality provision.

The encouragement of dialogue between the private and state sector, sharing expertise.

2a) Cost ??? Quality is expensive. Approach big business for investment in the

Islands future.

2b) Equity of Access - clearly unfair at present - provision of 20 hours in an appropriate setting is a start in right direction.

2c) Partnership - has to be conducted in a climate of mutual respect and trust where both sectors feel that they are working towards same end. We are not at this stage yet.

2d) Expectations and requirements of parents who wish to work.

- Social Security - proposed changes may effect flexible working arrangements.
- Are parents being encouraged to be flexible if they wish to work part time for example? Some parents make considerable financial sacrifices so that they can care for children at home.
- If there are tax allowances or sympathetic structures within the social security system then the well being of children should be safeguarded. The emphasis should not only be on meeting the needs of those children whose parents work full time but on flexibility and 'family friendly' education and care provision.