



Care of Children in Jersey Review Panel

Care of Children in Jersey Review

Witness: The Minister for Children and Housing

Friday, 2nd November 2018

Panel:

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

Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour

Senator K.L. Moore

Deputy T. Pointon of St. John

Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier

Witnesses:

The Minister for Children and Housing

Director General, Children, Young People, Education and Skills

Group Director, Children's Services

Director, Children's Policy

[9:58]

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

Good morning and welcome to our quarterly hearing for the Minister for Children and Housing. Thank you for your time this morning. Can I draw your attention, Minister, to the notice in front of you? If you have not read it before, please take a few moments to do so. We only have an hour and a half and we have plenty of questions to get through, so I would ask you to be as succinct as possible in your answers. If I interject to push you along a little, I am not being rude, I am just trying to get through the questions, so please be ready for that. I would like to welcome members of the public. We would ask that there are no interruptions and that your phones are put on silent as we

go through this. The entire recording is online and will be available. We would ask that the media and any bloggers are allowed to film for the first 5 minutes of the hearing only, but you will be able to get the entire hearing online and the transcript in the future anyway, so it is available to the public. There are web cameras installed so we are live, so welcome to all those listening at home. For the benefit of the record, I would like people present to introduce themselves and their professional title so that everyone knows who everyone is. That would be really useful. I will start. I am Deputy Robert Ward and I am chairman of the panel.

[10:00]

Deputy T. Pointon of St. John:

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

Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:

Okay, I am Deputy Mike Higgins, representing St. Helier 3 and 4.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin of St. Saviour:

I am Deputy Kevin Pamplin and I am vice-chairman of this panel.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Senator Kristina Moore, a member of the panel.

Group Director, Children's Services:

I am Susan Devlin, Group Director for Children's Services.

Director, Children's Policy:

I am Andrew Heaven. I am the head of Children's Policy.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Senator Sam Mézec, Minister for Children.

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

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

Scrutiny Officer:

Andy Harris, scrutiny officer.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Thank you very much. Okay, if we can get started, so first of all, Minister, can I ask you what are your priorities in relation to implementing the response to the independent care inquiry?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Okay. So the previous Government put together a response to the care inquiry report when that came out, which outlined a whole host of responses that needed to be put under way. That was quite an ambitious response and got the wheels in motion to some very important pieces of work, some of which we are seeing the benefits of already; for example, establishing the role of the Children's Commissioner, which has I think certainly been a success. All of those proposals that were identified in that response have either begun or are completed. Some of those there is ongoing work that needs to be done to strengthen what we have done there and improve. So the new Government has put putting children first as its top priority in its Strategic Plan, which I am delighted with. I think that it was absolutely the right thing to do and I was thoroughly pleased that there was absolute consensus for doing that. So there are things in the Strategic Plan itself but subsequent to that was published a report in the States Assembly that outlines some of the specific pieces of work that we are going to need to undertake. Some of these are things that you will be very aware of. One of those, which hopefully we will have some more to share with the panel later on this year, will be the actual legislation, which will enshrine the role of the Children's Commissioner. So at the moment we have a Children's Commissioner appointed but she is operating in shadow form at the moment essentially as a civil servant when in reality what we need is an independent Children's Commissioner whose powers and roles are defined in law and that the Government cannot tamper with and that enables her to hold us to account in the way that she ought to. So we are looking at bringing that draft of that legislation to the Council of Ministers later this year. I am particularly keen obviously that this panel gets its eyes on that and is able to comment or scrutinise in whatever way you see fit for that. As well as that, there is a new children's plan that will need to be brought forward. I know Andrew Heaven has been working very hard on that. What I am keen to see - and I am sure you will have other questions on this - is the previous children's plan I think was regarded not to have succeeded because it did not often have the funding associated with it to achieve many of the things that it was meant to do. That cannot be the case this time round. I think there is a clear political commitment that it will not be that case but when the next government plan is produced, what previously would have been the Medium Term Financial Plan, we have to absolutely make sure that the key actions that we are identifying as important for improving the life experience of children and young people in Jersey is funded and that our commitment is more than just words, it is actions with the necessary funding.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I just want to ask you a little bit about the timescales on that because the next question was going to be the financial priorities that you have. What I am concerned about is because we are tied to

the M.T.F.P. (Medium Term Financial Plan) until the end of 2009 there will be another year's delay before funding priorities are put in place to action what we all know needs to happen urgently. So how are you going to put that square peg in a round hole? There is a concern that everything is going to wait.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I accept that and I agree with that. I think that our previous version of having yearly plans or whatever you want to call it in Jersey was not flexible enough and we are in a position where we are under the constraints that were put upon us by the previous States Assembly. A new States Assembly with new priorities does not necessarily fit in. I agree with that and I think that that process needs to change. I think that the new Chief Officer of the States I think has some good proposals to make there. It is fair to say that the previous Administration, when the care inquiry report came out, accepted immediately ... I obviously was not a member of that so I do not fully speak for them, but it was obvious that they accepted that this was such a political priority that within the constraints that were available on the flexibility that was available in the previous M.T.F.P. funds were put towards actioning the points that were raised. I do not know if anyone else here wants to give any specific examples of that.

Director, Children's Policy:

In terms of the point that you raise about things having to wait, I would give examples of pieces of work that we are absolutely doing now and not waiting for. So there is a whole raft of work under the children's social work improvement boards that we set up in response to the independent inspection. So that is up and running and the Minister for Children is chairing that. There is work going ahead in relation to early help across the children's system. That is going on now. That is not waiting for 2019. Those are just 2. The work to put in place the appropriate legislation for the Children's Commissioner, the last tranche of that the law drafting instructions went across and into law drafting yesterday, so we are anticipating, for example, those key bits of architecture are continuing to be put in place. So I do not perceive, if I could, it to be a lag, a lead-in time, because there is that much going on in this space. I can reassure ...

Deputy R.J. Ward:

So the legislation, for example, will be available for January to come to the States?

Director, Children's Policy:

Yes, we are looking to lodge that in January.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay.

Senator K.L. Moore:

If we could, chairman, just stick with funding for a moment, there is a community and voluntary sector body that provides support for the families. Their support is mostly targeted at level 1 ... well, level 2 families, but they have been, following referrals to them, providing support for level 3 families, and 4, who are families at risk and families with children on the care register. But some of that ... not enough funding has come forward so that support has diminished from 40 families receiving help and assistance to now only being 11 in the level 3 bracket. So what is being done to ensure that those services can be done? Because clearly with being in that bracket of families at risk, they clearly have needs.

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

Shall I pick that one up?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Yes.

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

So Andrew has already referred to the review of early help, so rather than rush into ...

Senator K.L. Moore:

But this is not early help, if I may, this is level 3.

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

Well, it ranges, though. As you said, it ranges from prevention and early intervention right the way through to higher end interventions. The point of reviewing the early help arrangements and offer that we have is to make sure that we are doing the right things at those different levels. So it is quite a difficult answer in the sense of I am really clear that we should review what we are doing right the way through universal, targeted and specialist support for children and families and use that review to make better decisions about what we need at each of those levels rather than in the very short term to make tactical decisions to plug gaps that might not be the right ones. So I am really keen to bring a kind of evaluative approach to what we have been doing and making really clear that the interventions we use themselves are supported by evidence and that the impacts that they are having here in Jersey as opposed to anywhere else that they might be being deployed are the ones that we want them to have. So that is not a criticism. What I am saying is we are going to do a critique to make sure that all the things that we do and the way that they are delivered are the right things to be doing. In the very short term, I guess that will mean that we continue to do a little bit of ad hoc intervention because in order to get to a much more considered, informed and strategic

approach right across the stepping up and stepping down of support, you know, we will have to be ad hoc but I do not want to do things in the short term that, say, in 6, 9 or 12 months I then go back and say: "Can we stop doing that because we want to do this instead?" So that review of early help is quite significant, in my view. You are right that early help suggests that we are not talking about the highest levels of need, but until we get the process of escalating up and back down, until we have the range of services to fill all of those steps up and down, then we are potentially spending money in ways we should not be.

Senator K.L. Moore:

It is all well and good and I take the point but if a family is already at level 3 and that is assessed by the authorities, time is ticking and every month is a critical month because that family is potentially getting closer to becoming a level 4.

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

We will not be turning ... we will not be saying to families: "No, we are not dealing with you." What I am saying is we are not ... I am not wishing to put longer-term contracts or extensions to contracts in place at this time. I am more than prepared to make sure that there are ad hoc bits of support that go in, that they are credible and the right kind of intervention, so I do not mean ad hoc as in just made up on the spot. I just mean that they are tactical rather than strategic.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I just ... sorry, it is linked to this as well. I just want to confirm then and because I am concerned about this lag for ... I understand 2020, when we look at the new plans and whatever the M.T.F.P. will be called, we can use the priorities, the number 1 priority of putting children first; absolutely not a problem and I think many people on this panel will be pushing for that. But in the meanwhile, do you have enough financial support to implement the changes that are so necessary during that time from the current M.T.F.P.?

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

Well, that is a big question.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

It is quite an important one, I think.

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

It is an important question. So, okay, let me focus down on a particularly important matter at the moment, which is the improvement programme that is wrapped around children's services. So I know that is not quite the same thing as responding to the care inquiry, but nonetheless until we

stabilise and then significantly improve the performance of children's services in many ways we are not dealing with the key issue in the system anyway, are we? I am satisfied - I choose that word carefully because I would always like some more money - that the resource presently available is sufficient for us to mobilise that improvement effort. It does not mean that in 3, 6, 9, 12 months, having looked at the progress we make and the next challenges that we need to take on, that there will not be a question about have we got adequate resource. But right now in terms of the numbers of social workers, for example, that we need to employ and the money to do that, that is not ... there is not a lack of resource to do that. The issues, as I am sure you know, are different ones around the quality of that social work practice, the longevity of social workers, time on the Island, et cetera. So in the short term, in the 12-18 month window that I am looking at for the improvement plan, I think that the foundations that we need to lay are resourced. But back to the Senator's question - get that right, sorry - the early help space is the one that I expect us to come back and go: "We would like an enriched model." So I think the basics might be resourced but some of the things that we build out from the bases of good social work practice might take further resource.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

We are going to have to have very robust discussions when the next government plan is produced. This is politics; that is what we do. There will be competing priorities across the whole States Assembly for what particular projects people want to see done quicker or extra funding allocated. That is not something that anybody can get complacent about. Any Minister or any Back-Bencher can propose whatever they like to go in the government plan and that will be a full debate in the States Assembly. I feel that we are in a good place, though, moving up to that government plan, not just because of the political consensus that there is in the Council of Ministers that this needs to be a priority ... and can I say that I have never felt any hint of resistance from any other part of government against doing something for this agenda because they might see there is a priority elsewhere. I think everybody accepts that this is so important and is focused on the people in our community that we really need to be focusing on that I have never detected that resistance. But Jersey has a big cultural change that we need to see, so we cannot get complacent. When we see a particular action that is proposed that we are not satisfied is as robust as it needs to be, then it absolutely needs to be challenge. When we have that government plan debate, I hope that we are going to get widespread support for extra investment because if we were to continue on the basis that we are now, we would not be able to achieve those long-term aims that we do. So we do need investment in the service. We do need the political support to do that, and doing things as we have done for decades gone by is not good enough.

[10:15]

Deputy R.J. Ward:

There are some other questions that will come up but I think we will come back to those because I know I am asking all the questions at the moment. Do you want to take a question ... unless there is anything else on that?

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

The implementing of the recommendations, I know you have talked about the Children's Commissioner, but what about the other known successes so far?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I think there has been good progress that is made, and I know you are going to come on to this, but there has been really good progress made on the voice of the child. I know we are going to talk a little bit more about that later, but some of the work that has been done ... there was a children's survey. I think that has been an important piece of work in understanding how young people feel because we ... and this goes back to the cultural point. We need to ... not in a tokenistic way or anything, but we need to understand what young people feel about how things are going on and react to that properly. So that is a good first step. One of the big recommendations that was made by the care inquiry was to have independent inspections and that was always I think going to be a very big moment for the Island. When that report came out, it highlighted a lot of what we knew already but I think it was very helpful in helping us identify some of those next steps. That was obviously initiated by the previous Government but as they ... as Ofsted were in Jersey undertaking that work we did not sit still during that time period. As they were asking questions, you find when a question is asked of you and you are forced to think of what the answer is, it helps you identify what the problem is as opposed to the person asking the question. So some of that helped feed into the improvement plan when that was being put together. We have had success in putting the on-Island social work training, which is starting and that is great. That is going to be home-grown social workers for the future in Jersey, people who are committed to the Island, and that helps us, again, something I know you are going to be asking later about building a sustainable workforce. That is the successes but you will find that every time I have spoken as the Minister for Children I have not lost sight of what the challenges are, though. I know that we have a big cultural hill to climb here in terms of changing people's attitudes and changing how each part of our society plays its role in delivering for children, because it is not the same whether you are a private business or whether you are a government entity or whatever. That is going to be a huge challenge that may not be overcome in 4 years, 10 years, 20 years. It will be an ongoing journey for ever. I have found as Minister I always feel when we talk about our successes we do still need to talk about the challenges because of where we have come from.

The Deputy of St. John:

Minister, that is where I am coming from next. You talk about big challenge but what have the smaller challenges been and what are the smaller challenges that you envisage and how do you propose getting over those difficulties?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Well, I think ... and I know you are going to be asking more about this later, but in building a sustainable workforce there are a lot of small challenges there that then fit into a bigger picture. If we want the best children's services in the world and we want the best people working in our services, delivering the best possible outcome for young people, there are lots of little things that may be little on paper but in people's lives are quite big that are going to be difficult. So if we are having to bring people into the Island to work in our services, as we will have to do from time to time, they need to know that they can come to the Island and have a stable and happy life here, able to work hard, and that means we will have challenges with housing. We will have challenges with enabling those workers' families to thrive in the Island when they come with them, and in some ways that goes against what Jersey has had in place in our working and housing regulations up until now. So there are those sort of small challenges that we can overcome and we can tick that box and say: "Great, we have made this change and we know that that is a good thing" but will we necessarily feel the impact of that right away? Probably not. So some of these small successes may not often feel like successes because we have not felt the benefit and may not for several years after.

The Deputy of St. John:

I have to say I am not getting the feel for what the racetrack is like. Where are the hurdles and what are the hurdles? Recruitment and retention is something that is with us across the piece in all States departments, especially professional departments. But it is those other issues that you see might stand in the way of your pathway, your racetrack.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Other issues like ...?

The Deputy of St. John:

Well, those issues you have identified. I am searching for issues that you have identified.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Right. I know I keep going on about the cultural thing, but it is not just about how people feel, it is also about how the States has worked previously, so departments not communicating properly, departments not ... one part of the States identifying that there is an issue for a young person and

the practicalities of fixing it, just not ticking the relevant ... I am not phrasing this well. Every child's situation will be so unique that sometimes putting together a sheet of paper and asking: "Have you ticked these boxes?" is not always going to find you the right outcome, sometimes common sense or people just getting on with things and doing things and knowing that they have the authority to get on with it. That is always going to be a challenge in government because governments have to go by the rules that we set and then very often we find we have not set the right rules. That is going to happen time and time again. What we are going to have to do is react properly when we encounter those difficulties.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

A small example is perhaps the record of recommendations, which was referred to as a scorecard. We have objected to that and that has been taken away, but I think that is the sort of cultural change that we need. Do you agree with that in terms of the way we label? This is not just a systemic approach; it is about people. I think it is really important that we keep track of that. Can I just ask a couple of things from what Deputy Pamplin said? You used Ofsted for the report on children's services?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Yes.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

One of the positive things from that ... as an ex-teacher Ofsted obviously rings alarm bells with me, but the positive thing in the use of Ofsted, there was not a grading process, it was a commentary. Ofsted is coming back to do other reviews. Can you assure us that you will use the same process there, that you are not just going to ... because what we do not want is good or outstanding because that is all that will be latched on to, but that process of commentary and that process of these are the good and bad so that you can work and treat people as professionals, will you be using that same process with Ofsted?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Yes, and the way I see it is that those are not the terms that children would use to describe their situation. Because one thing is outstanding in this child's life, it may not work in this other child's life. So I do not think those are necessarily helpful terms. Internally we may have language that we use to describe whether something ... whether a particular action point has been a success or whatever, but I think when we have the conversation with the public and with children in particular, this has to be first and foremost about putting their experience and their perception of the world around them and getting the terms right so they not only understand but are able to talk back to us and feed how they feel in the appropriate terms so we know what we are doing.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

We will move on a little. You talked about ... we were going to ask you for a general update on the work being done on giving children and young people a voice just briefly if you can because we have quite a bit to go and I know there are some other things that are going to come from that. So what can you say to us as regards that?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Okay. So there is obviously the school-based participation strategy, which is looking at school council models in Jersey and trying to establish a wider network of these and give them the tools they need to be empowered to use their initiative to take young people to whether it is Ministers, whether it is this body or that body, when there is an issue that will affect young people and speak directly to them and having a framework where those young people are able to lead and take up that work.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Sorry to interrupt, but that is quite interesting because the next question I was going to ask about that ... because I think some of these terms here, this 2.2 on your develop and deliver school based ... I have a clearer picture of what you mean by that. So you are talking about literal representation within a school so there is a voice that can go forward to ultimately yourself and ourselves?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Absolutely, yes, sure, yes.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

So that is what it is going to look like?

Director, Children's Policy:

So an example: last week there was the first convening of a network of school councils. So children who are involved in school councils from their school all met together and talked about how they want to progress their school council and their experiences. I expect from ... and that was led internally by Education. I know also that Mark Capern from our youth service has been working on and with Mark Egan, our Greffier, in terms of creating a space, an opportunity where young people can start to connect with and make their voice heard, like the Minister was saying, with the political apparatus of this Island.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Are you in some way ensuring that that representation is truly reflective of our entire community?

Director, Children's Policy:

So there is the challenge. Hey, there is the challenge. So what is important is that the school councils work hard on how they represent the children in their class, children in their school, and equally in any forum that is set up to connect to this that there is some careful thinking about how you include. Because that is a challenge that many of us on various levels of this Island have not been good at, have we? So I think there is the challenge and there is the challenge for that work going forward.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Could I add to that and ...

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Sorry, I was just going to say what is the current situation? You mentioned school councils, you talked about student reps. How many are there? Are they functioning? I would like to know something about what is happening now rather than going forward.

Director, Children's Policy:

Do you mind if I pause and look at my notes and I will tell you?

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Go ahead.

Director, Children's Policy:

Thank you.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

We have some numbers.

Director, Children's Policy:

So there are 27 schools who are ... they are interested in developing their school councils further. On the day that I spoke about, there were 19 schools in the room with 58 representatives from their ... so from students and staff. So we have not all schools but a large part, a large group of schools, who are on that journey in terms of having a school council and committed to improving in terms of representation, in terms of how you get ... not just listen to the voice, it is about how you bring that influence into that setting in the first instance. Equally, the work that Mark ... the 2 Marks, if you like, are leading, there is an importance in terms of representation on how you connect it. Something like this would be quite terrifying so you need to think about how you do that.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Is there a good representation from the 11 to 16 schools, the non-selective schools?

Director, Children's Policy:

I do not have that in my notes but I can check and email you.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I think it would be really important for us to know about that.

Director, Children's Policy:

Yes, for sure.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

We are not going to wait until all schools are signed up before starting to do things here because we will want ... well, firstly, we want to get the ball rolling but we also would want those who are involved in it from the start to help build a strategy for how we involve the other schools that for whatever reason are not ready to join or are not at that point. Can I just add to the point that you have raised before? Because it was 10 years ago now, but it will not surprise anyone, that I served on a school council when I was at school, and I think my experience of it was that it was a tokenistic thing. It gave us a good opportunity to talk but did not lead to much else. This is the same of all human beings, not just children, but sometimes those with the most confidence to speak out are not necessarily representative of those who do not quite have the confidence to speak out. So it is absolutely right that we make sure that when representative bodies are being put together that we include children with all different sorts of backgrounds. We would have to make sure that there are children from our national minority groups, for a start, we would want L.G.B.T. (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) representation on there, disability, care experience. We need to make sure that it is not just a popularity contest; you have an election and vote for whoever gave the best speech in the school assembly, which is certainly what I did and how I got on my school council, but you want to make sure that it is properly representative.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

You bring me on to my question talking about the schools and the formal education sector. What about outside? How about giving, and how do you undertake, those children, who are not in formal education, a voice, who are at home or in care or being home-schooled? Because they could end up being the most vulnerable and it is connecting them so I am just curious based on what you have just been explaining there how you achieve it.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

That is an excellent question and I have memories of this being raised, very specifically, in meetings. I think we did say that we were going to look at those children who are not necessarily in mainstream school and making sure that they are included. Some of this is being led specifically by the Youth Service who have a very good reach and knowledge of the children who engage with them and I think also have their trust, which is really important. If it is a bunch of strangers turning up, then you will not necessarily have their trust. I do not know if there was anything else ...

[10:30]

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

The Youth Service obviously is one way and the Youth Service is very different to many years ago when there used to be multiple youth clubs. I used to go to Seaton Youth Club which is a gym now. There used to be Aquila, which I do not even know what it is now. So, yes, there has been success in amalgamating from all the town workshops but that does not capture everybody because some children do not want to go to where loads of other children are; it may be not the right setting. So, again, there may be children at home or wherever; whatever the situation is it is how do you bring those voices out because they could be the most important.

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

I think there are 3 answers to that and one of them goes back to your questions about resources. In fact, some of the real issues are going to come down to the extent to which you want to invest in either the States itself or the States supporting others to create networks that do not presently exist. So I think it is entirely proper to say that there will be gaps in voice and representation now because we do not reach every young person and we do not enable, therefore, every young person to have a voice when they might want to. So that is just worth saying and that will be a resource issue. But we have touched on the other 2 things already; so there is a formal system through schools and school councils. I think it is correct to say that every school has a school council, it is just that not every school council has yet signed up to the new network. That is something that we need to push forward with and I would expect every school council, while within a formal system, nonetheless to be reaching out to the school community that that council is expected to represent to make sure that it is inclusive. That is one of the ways that I would tackle it through an existing formal mechanism, as the Minister has said. He knows well I am not a fan of formal structures if all they do is replicate adult structures and, therefore, exclude those who do not understand or want to engage in something that looks like an adult structure that has just been kind of cut down to make it look like a child's one. So we need to be mindful that school councils do not turn into, if you will excuse me saying this, assemblies because they will not be fully inclusive if that is the case. The second point is about the Youth Service. So, while clearly, over time, youth provision appears to have diminished,

nonetheless I think there is representation in every parish and there are also thematic groups like The Inclusion Project. We need to either keep those alive or reinvigorate them or grow them in order that their reach increases but that probably comes back to the point about resources. Maybe there is a fourth point; so there is something called Jersey Cares, which has grown up just this year as a consequence of being motivated by what is happening in Scotland and some other places as well. We should not, as the States, rely all the time on our efforts to generate engagement and voice; there will be self - I know that is a terrible expression - but self-mobilising groups, will there not, who come together because they are a community of interest across the Island. What the States should be doing is making it ... putting no obstacle in the way of that, I guess is the way I would describe it, and we need to see more of that, I think. Because, relevant to an earlier point about challenges, one of the things that is really clear to me is too few children and families, especially those who have perhaps got some significant experience of engagement with the States, trust the States to get it right at the moment. We need to change that over time so I think it is going to be that we should be humble and rely on self-organising groups - that was the expression I was looking for - not getting in the way of self-organising groups who want to support themselves and have a voice back into the States.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I just ask then, it might be useful for us to each have a list of the schools that have signed up so that we are aware. Perhaps earlier rather than later this panel should meet with those groups in an informal setting so there is access to the Scrutiny Panel and we can perhaps try and get the message across. I know our scrutiny officer has a very good presentation that perhaps we could deliver; I think that would be a really good thing to do. Is there anything else on that?

The Deputy of St. John:

I just want to add that we are already surveying children and young people in certain years in relation to the provision for post-16 education. As part of that we are planning ongoing and meeting groups of ...

Director, Children's Policy:

You are or the panel?

The Deputy of St. John:

Yes.

Director, Children's Policy:

Okay, great.

The Deputy of St. John:

Informally in various settings.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

It is the Education and Home Affairs Panel for a piece of scrutiny ...

The Deputy of St. John:

An interesting and common thing, but our Health and Social Services are doing a review into mental health services and that is everything as well, and obviously we are starting to find out areas where young people ... which I think is going to be very relevant, which I think would bring to this panel because ...

The Minister for Children and Housing:

That is going to be a very helpful piece of work.

The Deputy of St. John:

Some of us are going to get to meet the same children twice.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Or perhaps different children.

The Deputy of St. John:

Yes.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I ask you to update us on the role of the children's rights officer? Has it been recruited to?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

There were interviews that took place on 26th October and it is, I think, envisaged that a secondment will begin this month.

Group Director, Children's Services:

Yes, that is correct. We interviewed 5 people last week. We have gone for a secondment initially to get somebody in the post and running with the role so I anticipate having somebody in post full time from 19th November. For the first couple of weeks that they are in post I want them to spend some time with counterparts in the U.K. (United Kingdom), across the U.K., both with children's rights, social services who are based in local authorities and also third sector organisations. It is not a role we have had here so it is important that we look at best practice. I think that was one of the

things that the chair of the panel said: "Make sure you make those network links." So we want to do that for the first couple of weeks or so and then get them in and hit the ground running, really.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

So you are clear as to what their operational responsibilities would be or will that be something that will develop?

Group Director, Children's Services:

I think it will develop because we want to speak to children about some of their priorities. But the focus is on their rights with particular focus on looked after children. So there will be bits about advocacy. If there are complaints, there will be bits about supporting complaints. There will be the challenge to the service about how they are running things or anything that potentially infringes a right and really just surfacing that. We also want to have the role of 2 children's rights assistants and that is a model I have seen elsewhere with those assistants having been care-experienced young people, so bringing that richness of experience. Albeit that that might be very challenging and bring some tension, that is really some of what is required in this system to push that.

The Deputy of St. John:

This individual is already resident in the Island?

Group Director, Children's Services:

Yes. They are already working in Children's Services. They are an experienced member of staff and they are absolutely passionate. They have talked about this being their dream job so I think that is a really good start. I think it is somebody that many of the young people know.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Is that role under the independence of the Children's Commission or is that a civil service role?

Group Director, Children's Services:

No, civil service role. The chair of the care inquiry suggested that role should report to the managing director of Community Services, which was me at that time. That role has slightly changed so the role will report into me as the Group Director. I think that it is important that they are not having to go through layers of management to try and resolve issues but they are able to come to the senior manager responsible. Certainly there have been times ... in a previous jurisdiction I have previously managed children's rights officers and they can bring tension and real challenge into the system and that is absolutely what they are there for, to poke out the things that are not working and are not right. So it is very much about the children's rights agenda.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Sorry, I have just been handed a note and multitasking is not my strong suit. Senator.

Senator K.L. Moore:

We are going to move on now to talk about the pledge to Jersey's children and young people that was published in early September. Firstly, we would just like to know what initial reactions have been, in the Minister's view.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

This might sound strange but I will just give you a couple of anecdotes or moments that happened throughout this that made me feel very positive about this. Because when we do something like this it is, I think, very easy ... and those people who do this will do this for the right reasons, but those who were negative about it used the word "gimmick" and I completely understand where they are coming from. But there were 2 moments that happened when we were doing this that made me feel like we were doing the right thing. So, when we launched the pledge we had the Council of Ministers, or most of the Ministers, were there to sign it and the senior executive leadership of the States were there to sign it, too. There was one senior executive who came to sign it who ... what he does in his day-to-day role you would think does not have much to do with children, it certainly does not have anything to do with Children's Services. He signed it and as he signed it he just said to me: "We have to do this, this is about our children, this is about my children." Which I thought, that sums it up. This is someone who in their day-to-day role may not be encountering children as part of what he does but to know that this has to be at the forefront of our minds at all times. There was another States Member, an Assistant Minister, who signed it and said: "I am signing this for my grandkids because I want this to be the best place in the world for them to grow up." That is the ethos that I think needs to underpin this. There were some who maybe had difficulties with the wordings of it, the use of the word "we" at the start of every point of the pledge. I think some interpreted that as being the Royal "we" as in eaning "I". So when it says: "I need to publish regular updates on this" they were thinking: "Well, how do I publish regular updates? That is not my job, that is your job." But the use of the word "we" was important because it was asking all of us to be part of that bigger picture. So, as Minister for Children, I might have executive responsibility for X, Y, Z. As a Scrutiny Panel, you have responsibilities that are different to that but are still important in ensuring that we are an Island community where children can thrive. You have to hold me to account for that, to know that you have pledged to do that with the same ethos, the same aim that this becomes the best community in the world for children to grow up in. What I have found in some Council of Ministers meetings, and I do not need to attribute this to everyone, but it has come up in conversation a few times where it has been said: "Oh, you know, well, we have pledged to do this so we have to be sincere to that." So it is being brought up and it fits into that wider aim of changing the culture where children are treated seriously, where we listen to them and care what they think and say and

act upon it. It also, I think, fits in, and this goes back to the previous question about the rights officer, that we are on a journey, part of which will be implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Island and that is going to change how we do things. When the Government produces a piece of work it is going to have to consider how this piece of work affects children, even if that is not necessarily obvious. Sometimes you might think the effect it will have on children will be in years to come or down the road, whereas some things will be obvious. But it is about asking that question every time even if it is not obvious. So, it was not changing the law, it was not forcing particular actions to be undertaken, as of rights that we can be sued in court if we do not do, but it is part of that broader change in the culture. I think it was the right thing to do and I hope that it has brought people together, even if we are going to have furious disagreements from time to time over the detail of some of this; but to remember that, in all of this, whatever perspective differences we may have, the people who are important are the children and as long as we are looking out for their interests at least we are coming from the right place even if we may struggle from time to time on the delivery of some things.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

How are you going to win over the people who thought it was a gimmick and either signed it reluctantly - I say reluctantly because they thought it was a gimmick - or did not sign it at all?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Yes, that is a good question. There are a few who have not signed and I have said from the start that anybody who does not want to sign up to it, that is completely their right to do so and I want to hear from them why. I want to understand because it is important for me, as the Minister, to have that conversation with each of those people because we will come at this from a different place. We might have different priorities within the greater scheme of things and it is important for me to know where they are coming from and respect their position but understand what I can do, if not to win them over to physically go and sign it, at least to win them over or have a mutual understanding of where they see their role in this bigger picture of supporting children on the Island and know how I can work with them and where they fit in it.

[10:45]

So, if some do not want to sign it, you know, I of course would want everyone to but if they do not, fine, but as long as we have some sort of understanding of where we are coming from and know that we can work together when we need to for this broader aim.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

I will just interject and note, as somebody who has not signed, that that is indeed exactly what you have done with me. We have exchanged emails and we have talked about it. I never called it a gimmick either, I am just one of those people, before signing anything in life, as part of my panel's responsibility and also in my role as a father of 2 young children, before I sign it I just want to go on this journey before I come to that probable conclusion. I think that is just a good thing to hear because we are all independent and we all do things differently, because I do not think we would all be sat here if we did not think why we want to be here. So I think it is just good to hear that and have those open conversations because it is those conversations in public that is part culture changing.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

This is about winning people's hearts, at the end of the day. It is not ... you know, we could pass a law that forces you to do X, Y and Z but if you do not believe in it and you do not see the value in it then it is not quite as good as winning people's hearts and minds to know if they are doing the right thing.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Your eighth commitment reads: "We will set and publish clear standards and we will be held publicly to account for achieving them." What work has been done so far to set those clear standards and to work towards publishing them?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

So the improvement board, I think, is a good place to start on that because that is doing a huge amount of things. Do you want to say some of that?

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

Yes, absolutely. So, I think at this stage what we are doing is we are relying on known standards that come off the back of inspection and regulation and have written an improvement plan that, should you do those things well and consistently, will meet those standards. In terms of the option of writing a framework for Jersey, I think 2 things about that: one is we need to be in close dialogue with the Care Commission because what it does around future inspection and regulation may take care of the job of here are some standards, although I do not believe completely; its remit is not life, the universe and everything. Then, secondly, in the preparation of comprehensive legislation for children and young people and families here, which is a big task, we are setting ourselves to scope it before Christmas. I think Andrew will then do work on the development of it next year. I would expect the forming out of a legislative framework would be a set of expectations/competencies/standards; we would have to have the debate as to exactly what we called them, that demonstrated what good or better than good look like so that you knew how we

could benchmark ourselves against it. There is then a lot of service-specific standards anyway that already exist, you know, that we would expect to be meeting in the practice of this, that and the other but I think we kind of fall back on already. But for me, fundamentally, in my head, and I have mixed views about Ofsted as well, but in my head it has a good framework. It does not always execute that framework very sensitively or effectively as a good framework for knowing what good looks like and we should work to that for now.

Senator K.L. Moore:

That sounds all well and good, particularly in the context of it could be lack of progress that had been made from the Scottish Commission's report in 2012, I think, versus the one that was published this year. But if you refer back to the first commitment, which is about listening, how will the standards that are set and the measurements be based on a listening process as well?

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

I will say something and then hand over to Susan. Sorry to use jargon but you will be familiar, obviously. So the voice of the child is something that you should be looking for in every bit of the Children's Service and across the department, of course, and there are ways of tracking that. So, we expect that children are seen and heard when social workers are either going out or convening meetings to check on safety and progress, and we would expect to see that recorded. Our auditing work of case files will show us whether the voice of the child was sought and, if it was sought, what was said and what was done about that. So I think at the kind of micro level we are now having systems come into place that were not previously necessarily systematic at least. I think there were bits of this that will tell us whether children's views are being sought and heard in the day to day of their life and their engagement with the service. A little earlier in this meeting we heard about some of the macro-engagements, so to speak, with wider groups of interest or geography, have we not, and we need to connect those 2 things together. I think the other thing we could think about ... but again, you know, this is all about what you do first. But in the way that reports are prepared in the future, both for the officer groups that I go to but then into the political world, we need to think about the extent to which we have made some kind of assessment around listening to what children and young people think about that and the impact it might have on them. So I am used to, in other places, there being a section in a report that explicitly talks about the impacts on children, young people and families. If you come from Wales, a place of good policy all round it seems to me at times, they have a commitment, have they not, to sustainability? It is a sustainability commitment that says what would this policy mean in the long term for children and young people. These are things that we should think about.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I just ask on that what feedback have you received from children and young people about the pledge?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I think it would be helpful for us to go out very specifically to young people and there is a plan to do that. So as of this point the feedback has been anecdotal, there has not been an exercise yet. But that is because that further engagement process is going to happen and that will not just be to young people but also to businesses and media and that sort of thing to understand what role they play in it. So the feedback I have had so far has been anecdotally. We were at the Oscars the other night, for example, spoke to a lot of young people there and had some really good discussions. There were, I think, a very healthy amount of people who were aware of what was going on and had the initiative to come and talk about it.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

So generally positive views?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Yes, but I do not just want to speak to people who have a positive outlook on it. I want to meet people who are cynical about it. I want to meet people who are not impressed by it because those, in many ways, are the people we need to speak to most. We need to know why they feel that way and what we can do to support that.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Because is that not what you touched upon earlier about the culture where people do not feel the States ... that trust element, that they have seen this. Is it not you earn that by doing?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

This goes to what the care inquiry controversially referred to as “the Jersey way.” You know, some people were not happy that they did that but I think it is important that they did it because it touched upon something important that we absolutely have to recognise, which is that there are sections of our community that think differently about things to how we think. Their views are legitimate and their perceptions are important and we cannot just dismiss them: “Oh, they think that way because they do not understand.” Or that: “They just think that way because blah, blah, blah.” We have to treat their views seriously and become a community which is united on all the great things about Jersey, as we know there are, but a community that is not afraid to have those tough discussions about the things we disagree with and come together to find solutions.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

So could it be argued that by going out and speaking to people they could have come up with the pledges; they could have given us the pledges empowered by them, that we agree to their pledges, to match them, and the process go the other way? The pledges come from the young people telling us, based on all that is around them, based on the history that we pledge to them as opposed to us pledging ...

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Young people have an amazing way of telling older people things that would simply have never occurred to us if we had not taken the time to go and talk to them. So, that can only be a valuable exercise in doing that and we may learn about the things that we think we are doing right and we are not and we will have to react to it and treat their views seriously.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

How do they know about the pledge?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

We did a lot on social media which was quite good. I know the pledge itself has been sent to a lot of agencies; I have seen it up on the wall in some places so I think through the Youth Services, that is how some people have heard of it.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I am just conscious of time. We have quite a few to get through. Can I ask one quick question before we go on to the next one? How many children are in care in Island and off Island?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Susan, do you have that number?

Group Director, Children's Services:

Yes, I think ... sorry, if I just recollect, we had 108 at the end of last month and I do not know the figures for the end of this month because we are just at the 2nd so I do not have them yet. We only have 23 children off-Island. Of those 23 a number of them are in permanent family placements so there is no intention, for them, that they come back, that they remain looked-after children.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay. Just to move on then, the Chief Minister announced Public Services were looking to make £30 million of savings; one of the main ways was from vacancy management. How will these savings impact on the plans to build a sustainable workforce working with children and young people, given that 355 vacancies are within Health and Social Services? I have highlighted a number here,

for example, 7 social workers, 0.5 of a M.A.S.H. (multi-agency safeguarding hub) social worker, one residential team leader. Two residential team leaders are identified as current vacancies, and of those 355 only 123 have been actively recruited. Do you know which vacancies you can expect to lose in that saving process?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I suspect that we are coming from a similar place on this subject with the same concerns. I am concerned about this as well and I do not accept that when a job comes up in ... whenever there is a vacancy in Children's Services the assumption should be that we do not re-recruit that role. I do not agree with that. I think that there are particular areas where we need more people working in our services. I do not know if it is still 50 per cent but at some point there was 50 per cent of people working frontline roles were agency workers. Sometimes that is a good thing to have agency workers in a position, particularly at a time that having more permanent workers with connections to the community is what we have to aspire to. I think it is right to say that every now and then you need to look at how your services are delivered and know that the roles that exist are the right roles. So I do not think things should stay the same as they are for ever but I am concerned about vacancies in frontline services not being filled. That is a concern that I will be raising at the Council of Ministers to make that clear that if these vacancies are having a negative impact on children we should not be complacent about that and should not, in the ... with the greater aim of saving money, should ignore the level of service being provided to children. That is not where I am coming from and those are concerns I will be shouting from the rooftop.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

There is a really key point here. You would agree then that pledging to put the children first at the same time as cutting significant amounts of money in 2019 at the end of the M.T.F.P., and we come back to something I said right at the beginning, that year of lag could be a very damaging year if we are not careful for Children's Services if we lose those vacancies and say there is nothing we can do about it because of the shackles of the M.T.F.P. So we need to do something about ensuring that if that takes finance from somewhere, that those vacancies that are so essential to frontline services will not be lost.

The Deputy of St. John:

It is understandable that we have become exercised about the loss of vacancies, if you like, loss of posts. But if we are able to recruit to vacancies it is worth getting exercised but I gather, and perhaps you can give me more clarity, that there is a severe problem in recruiting permanent social workers to the vacancies that exist. In addition, I would like to ask what you are doing about it.

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

Right, so there are 3 different questions in there. Susan will speak, I think, particularly to the workforce piece. So, from my perspective as a senior official, work is not yet done to determine, whether through vacancy management, through headcount reduction, whatever, how the £30 million is going to be delivered. That work is under way.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay, so there was an announcement made on vacancy management before you had done the work on the vacancy management, just to make that clear.

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

Because there is a calculation that if you had maintained the level of vacancy management that would account for a certain period, absolutely. But in terms of the longer term ...

[11:00]

Deputy R.J. Ward:

There has been a common theme to these questions in these hearings. Sorry, carry on.

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

That has helped, thank you. But I am really clear that among the directors general, we are doing the work as part of the ongoing target operating model implementation to make sure we have proposals around the different ways that you could save that money. That is the first thing to say. The second bit I am much clearer about. So Susan is the most senior officer responsible for Children's Services specifically; I am the most senior officer responsible overall for the department. We will recruit 2 essential frontline social work posts while at the same time doing that work that I have just referred to to make sure we understand the longer term way of saving £30 million across the States. But I am really clear that in terms of posts that have become vacant there is a decision that Susan and I take around whether they should be filled. Given the additional investment that was made to increase the social work establishment in 2016 we would look ridiculous, I think I am prepared to say, if we were not filling those ... attempting to fill those posts in a timely manner. The third bit I am going to hand over to Susan because she will have the better detail than me around the recruitment challenge that we face, but in a sense the recruitment challenge is different from the financial questions, is it not?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay, so just to confirm so that it is really clear because I think it is clarity that is the issue. There is no real clarity on which of these vacancies will be lost at the moment for 2019, which is 2 months

away, and how those £30 million are saved, but you are looking at perhaps losing posts to help with those savings?

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

Right, okay. Absolutely. So, again, for clarity's sake, what I and the other directors general are having to do is we will look at where we might make head count reduction and/or, but it is probably and, vacancy management, obviously the 2 things being different. So we may take some posts literally off the establishment so we are not doing those or filling those roles anymore. Otherwise it is about how long you take before you decide to go back to market, in other words you slow down the cost, yes? We will be looking at both of those things because the vast amount of our resources is properly tied up in human beings.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Do you know when you will have an answer to that?

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

I am imagining that by the end of the year we will need to have those answers. I am also really clear that in terms of implementation of change the second phase of the target operating model has always been and is still intended to be complete by the end of March 2019.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Which is likely to be a reduction of workforce.

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

I would find it difficult to work out how to spend £30 million less revenue ...

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Without a reduction in workforce.

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

... without a reduction in workforce.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Okay, thank you. Sorry ...

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Before we start with Susan, can I just ask a question? How many social workers do you have at the present time and what is their average caseload? I am talking about the frontline dealing with children.

Group Director, Children's Services:

Yes. We have 48 full-time equivalent social workers on establishment. One of those posts is currently being used to fund a third sector organisation to do some work to review funding N.S.P.C.C. (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children), their post-abuse traumatic service Letting the Future In. So we have 47 and that is spread right across Children's Services, across children in need team, fostering and adoption team, M.A.S.H. So that is what we have. We have probably 50 per cent, I think, who have permanent staff in those posts. The rest are filled with agency staff, some of whom have been with us on a fairly long-term basis, and when I say that I mean over 12 months. To pick up Deputy Pointon's point, we are fishing in a very small pond. Trying to get competent, experienced, permanent social workers for children's social work is very difficult right across the U.K. and there are, of course, additional issues of coming to Jersey in an Island jurisdiction.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

What is the average workload of the ... ?

Group Director Children's Services:

Sorry, that was your other point. When we had the investment in 2015 and 2016 we were able to reduce the caseloads quite significantly. So, on average a social worker is sitting with about 16 to 18 children in their caseload, which would be regarded as pretty reasonable. I think they are busy. Although their caseloads are reasonable they are very busy and much more so than people imagine they will be when they arrive in Jersey.

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

There are always caveats about complexity with those numbers.

Group Director, Children's Services:

Yes, numbers are only very ...

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

There is a survey under way in the U.K. at the moment which is suggesting that, again, the average number of children per social worker is about 19. So we are well within tolerance but, of course, it is about complexity.

The Deputy of St. John:

Do you engage social work support workers?

Group Director, Children's Services:

Yes. So we have a number of family support workers who sit in teams. Generally, our teams consist of a team manager, a couple of senior practitioners who are social work qualified. We have 15 of them across the service. We generally have 7 or 8 social workers in a team with a couple of family support workers who are doing a lot of the ancillary and support tasks, some of the more practical tasks; helping with parenting, for example, and more kind of practical things.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Having such a high percentage of agency staff surely has a cost when we go back to the resource point that we were talking about. I appreciate the difficulties in recruitment at the moment but what is being done to ensure that there is a greater percentage of non-agency staff?

Group Director, Children's Services:

So we work very hard; it feels like we recruit all the time. In fact, we are engaging an external organisation to try and have a more effective campaign in terms of reaching the right people, the right demographic that we want, because we also do not want everybody who is just newly qualified. That does not give you a balanced workforce either; you need some people with experience. So we are developing a campaign. We are at recruitment fairs trying to push on with people by the professional challenge that Jersey offers because you want to appeal to people's professional values and sense of being able to make change and, of course, there is a landscape for making change here. I think we have seen some other practical changes that have been required in relation to employment entitlements and housing, and for partners of people who come over on a licence. I also would say that things like the pledge, if I might just pop back to that for a minute, it is quite an important thing for staff. We saw in the care inquiry and subsequently with the Care Commission report that progress had been made in spite of the system and there was a real need for a whole system change. So, staff in Children's Services will have felt quite isolated over the years and the object of things. I think for them to see a pledge that politicians and senior executives are signing is quite an important statement of intent and it does go some way to beginning to change the reputation of Jersey as we try and attract people.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I ask ... we had a bit about it earlier but I think it is significant and the right time. What are you doing to implement ... if there are significant changes needed and anyone coming into an organisation with such significant changes and, very importantly, those who are already here and will stay here and show their loyalty, what are you doing to ensure that they are being supported

during this period of significant change, particularly, for example, given the findings in the bullying and harassment report, which is not good? There are still significant issues there and at a time of significant change they can be ... you know.

Group Director, Children's Services:

I think that is a really interesting point because there was an article in the press over the summer about some of the issues you have referenced in relation to Children's Services and many of our staff were unhappy about that. They felt that was a historical comment. Ofsted also found morale to be reasonably high and, given the circumstances, that may be a bit of a surprise. We have seen staff move into new accommodation. We have supplied them with some new technological devices to try and ease some of the administrative burden. We have put in some more admin support because I would rather have social workers doing social work than a load of admin to feed a machine. We have also engaged staff in a pretty significant training course around what is called systemic approaches, so it is a way of intervening with families and children. So we have had ... I think there are about 20 of us at all levels in the organisation being involved in accredited training. That has gone down really well. I think it has been quite challenging for staff. They have been on the red eye travelling to London and meeting with colleagues from across the U.K. but it has been important and folk have stuck in with that and that has run from May through to February. We will repeat that next year. So, those kinds of things are really important. I think they have also seen, post the inspection in June, a new improvement plan and I think the focus on that has been helpful. So while some of that ... it is quite clear things are not good enough yet and I do not think anyone in the service would suggest they were. It is important for staff to feel that there is a real collective endeavour and that we are not operating in a blame culture; we are trying to work to get somewhere better together.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I think that is a very important point, that blame culture, and when there are significant problems sometimes that can be used to force people out. I am glad to hear that, in your opinion, that is not going to happen.

Group Director, Children's Services:

I think it is important. People choose to come to Jersey and make a commitment and, you know, there is not a queue of people. We have the people we have and it is about us, how we develop their competence, how we make sure we have practice standards in place that are explicit, that people can hold us to account to, that we are able to report on. For me it is about the collective effort. It does not matter who you are in the organisation, you have a contribution to make and none of us can solve it on our own in the same way that Children's Services cannot solve the issue without other departments, without the backing of the States Assembly and the Government.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Sorry, I am interrupting because I would like to ask this. Is there specific support in a small Island community where you can be very close in proximity, literally proximity a mile away, from families that you are trying to support who face such challenging lives? Are there specific mechanisms of support in place there?

Group Director, Children's Services:

I think what we all want to have is good supervision because you are right, most people ... when I worked in the U.K. and I was a social worker, a team manager, I did not live in my patch; I had some distance. You do not have that here, you know. We have the one big town where much of our work comes from. So I guess it is about us having good supervision in place and also making sure that people are very clear about boundaries and codes of conduct, and about us having a watchful eye to make sure that is retained and, if we need to give people additional support, whether that is through whatever, whether it is occupational health and if that was appropriate we would look at that.

The Deputy of St. John:

You mentioned that you have, by way of support to improve skills, social workers going off Island for systemic therapeutic training. How many people found it difficult to go on to that course because of the fact that it is off Island?

Group Director, Children's Services:

Yes. When we were commissioning that training we had a discussion about shall we deliver it on Jersey or will you come to the sessions already organised at the Centre for Systemic Social Work in London, and at that point we decided, on balance, that we would go for it being in London because we wanted to offer people the opportunity to meet colleagues from all around the U.K. and we were mindful of that kind of keeping in touch with practice elsewhere. It has proved difficult for some people. A couple of people have had to pause their involvement in that because they are getting up on the red eye, it is a very long day. It is an intense day because you are thinking all the time and then you are back late.

[11:15]

So we have tried to give people bits of study time. We have said to them: "If you want to go the day before and stay overnight, well, do that so you are fresh." So we have tried to do that. I think next year we probably will look to training being delivered on Island.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

How many people are we talking about on the course?

Group Director, Children's Services:

I think we started with 24, now we are down to 20. A couple of people have left the organisation.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

When you say you tried, it is quite an important word. Have you succeeded in giving the time that is necessary? Because I know that decent training for any professional ... I come from a teaching background. Sometimes there simply was not the time given.

Group Director, Children's Services:

Yes, and I think ...

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Sorry, and all we got from the management of that was: "We tried."

Group Director, Children's Services:

So we do try, and I would say to ...

Deputy R.J. Ward:

We know that.

Group Director, Children's Services:

I would say it is very trying. We would say to people ... if they had an assignment they all got a certain amount of study time to help them with that assignment. What we have said to people is the normal arrangements to get a bit of time back apply. The thing about children's social work is it is quite often emergencies that pop up all the time so the best laid plans, but we have made a commitment to facilitate that if we possibly can. But something will happen and social workers being social workers will want to deal with things that happen on their caseload rather than getting a colleague to do it.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Without labouring the point, and we can move on because we are running out of time, this is the issue. When you have a shortage of staff and a lot of agency staff and you have a very busy time with emergencies coming up, that trying can often be lost and I think it is very important that we support people in developing these sorts of processes.

Group Director, Children's Services:

So do I. I am absolutely committed to supporting them. The nature of the work, though, is sometimes that the best laid plans go slightly awry.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes, but looking after staff is also important.

The Deputy of St. John:

I have declared an interest here in that when you are considering the training in Island for qualified social workers and perhaps their assistants, would you speak to the Jersey Association for Family Therapy, who currently have a link with an NHS trust and are currently running courses in the Island?

Group Director, Children's Services:

Yes, I am aware of that and some of our longer standing members of staff have done some of their courses in the past. What we have done is go for the accredited course that is being run by the Centre for Systemic Social Work. It was also about linking, as I said, with colleagues. We would, of course, look at the best way and the most appropriate way of delivering training.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I think, Senator Moore, you have something from that; you have a question.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Can we go on to a different subject?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I think it is relevant. Was that you? Sorry.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

No surprise in my interest in the voluntary sector. You have mentioned the N.S.P.C.C. but there are other charities on Island, Brighter Futures, et cetera. How could they be included in developing some of the frontline staff as well as obviously what else they provide?

Group Director, Children's Services:

Is it a question that is initially around the children's plan in a wider agenda or do you want me to talk some specifics?

Director, Children's Policy:

One of the things that we are bringing forward, and it will be in front of the Council of Ministers during November, is a children's plan which is about all children. One of the things that we have been thinking carefully about, both in terms of putting that together and also thinking about implementation, is about how we work with all sectors on the Island who have an interest in children, so thinking about going beyond children's social work, going beyond schools, and one of the key groups is the voluntary sector. They have certainly mentioned Brighter Futures. We could also talk about Barnardo's, we could also talk about N.S.P.C.C., and others have been very involved in helping shape priorities in the children's plan that we will be putting in front of the Council of Ministers soon. I would anticipate and have been deliberately constructing a way of working to implement that children's plan that includes our colleagues in the voluntary sector so that we can collectively focus on a common endeavour because it is quite important that everybody gets to play a part.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Is the referral process within that, as something in the background? How does a voluntary sector charity who may have access to information refer people or a family or children to professional services without coming against brick walls and be taken seriously?

Director, Children's Policy:

Okay. So what I was talking about was policy and policy implemented.

Deputy K.G. Pamplin:

Yes. No, that is fine.

Director, Children's Policy:

I will be delighted to bring that plan to you and let you have that once we have put it through council, absolutely no problem at all. The issue around how on the ground, which is just as important, the voluntary sector work with our statutory services, Susan?

Group Director, Children's Services:

Yes. So, I think that is something that is ripe for improvement and one of the vehicles that we want to use is what is called the Jersey practice framework. That is essentially a framework that anybody working with children should start to use. It is called Jersey children first, I think. Some members of the panel are aware of it perhaps more than others. What that does is it is a framework that we will all work to across a continuum of needs, so from children just starting to need a bit of additional support right through to those most in need with the highest level. So it allows people to be organised, in a way, across the spectrum. It looks at identifying who would be the lead worker for a child so that there is no dubiety. It looks around having a children's assessment rather than a social work assessment and an education assessment, one assessment for a child. There might be

specialist bits apparent for that. It also smooths out some of the referral processes so that people would call a team around a child meeting. They would invite whoever should come to that and they would work on a plan with the child and family. Of course, at the moment we also have M.A.S.H. sitting there as the front door into Children's Services and into the safeguarding help so that is where ... I think people pretty well know that that is how you access support or an assessment of need, but the practice framework will really assist. Training has started for anybody working with children and there are different graduated levels of training from awareness training right through to assessment, rating and doing assessments across all agencies. It is multi-agency. We are anticipating about 4,000 to 5,000 people will go through that training. So we will have a real framework that we use in Jersey and it will stop all those different referral forms and all that confusion.

Senator K.L. Moore:

So we are going to move on now. We would just like to talk about foster services and what work is being done to review the existing services.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

There is work going on to review it. I am aware that a draft report was submitted to Susan last month and I am in a position of being able to say that I have not yet seen it but am anticipating being given this draft report at some point this month. After that there will be an opportunity to brief States Members and if they want their own briefing I am sure that we can arrange that, as well as speaking to stakeholders out in the community that may be interested in this. I will hand over to Susan in just a second. The report does set out recommendations, again, of which I have not seen yet but I am aware that the recommendations, or at least some of them, will have financial implications which we will have to discuss then and that will have to feature in part of our thinking for the Government plan. But that is more or less all I can say on that. I do not know if Susan wants to comment.

Group Director, Children's Services:

Yes. We had the independent review which was one of the recommendations, of course. I have a report. I have asked for some work to be done to compile an action plan so that we can get timescales and responsibilities nailed down. It will be a report that touches on other aspects of government. So, for example, in other jurisdictions there are issues around tax or social security benefits so we may find ourselves thinking and considering some of those issues as well, perhaps accommodation, all of those kinds of things, which is why I want to bring it to States Members' notice.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

I am aware of time and we have theoretically 5 minutes for this. Please do, if you do want to ask. Deputy Higgins, do you want to ask your question now?

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Okay. Obviously the independent Jersey inquiry highlighted that the Island had failed our children and obviously there have been other reports that have said we have failed and are failing. Why should the public trust you, collectively, to deliver changes and deliver those quickly? Because we all love hearing about the initiatives and things starting but it is the actual implementation of some of these that we are really concerned about.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

That is a great question and I will say from the outset that I fully accept that there will be people who have had such negative experiences throughout their lives engaging with the States of Jersey that there is nothing I can do to make them trust me or trust the institution. But that does not mean we should not try our absolute best to deliver whatever we possibly can for these people. Why should they trust me?

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Not just you personally, it is collectively.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Everyone will have a different perception of where we are today. What I have been keen to do, first and foremost, is to accept without qualification that we have done, as an Island, as the States of Jersey, we have done a terrible job for a long time. I am not going to put caveats before that; there were people who were not treated with the respect, dignity and love that they should have been by the States over decades and that is a shame on our Island that that is where we are coming from. We have had 2 substantial reports into what has happened in Jersey and what is happening in Jersey that have presented some very helpful recommendations and suggestions on how we move forward together as an Island. I feel that right now there is excellent political commitment to follow through on this. The previous Chief Minister, who, it is no secret, I had many political disagreements on, I thought he did an outstanding job dealing with this in its early days and set very important groundwork. As someone who was largely a political opponent of his at the time, I am more than happy to say that and I think that shows the unity that there is on the aim of moving forward. My experience in the Council of Ministers thus far, as a new Minister and working with Ministers who are also new and also some who were in the previous Government, is that I feel that there is the political commitment to deliver on this. I feel, in particular, individuals I see and work with get it, who speak in terms that to me suggests a good understanding of what this is really about, because it is not about what laws we pass, what services, it is about who we are as a community and how we treat people who are vulnerable here. I know that there is still a long journey to go on, in many

areas, each of us understanding our corporate parenting role. There is progress that needs to be made there.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

I thank you for the comments. Can I just come on to - it may seem mundane but it is very, very important - the record keeping within the departments because they have been criticised? I know they are inaccurate in many cases or they are inadequate. What are you doing to improve the record keeping relating to children?

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

I think that is for Susan or I. I suppose it is a conversation about Mosaic then really, is it not? Susan, do you want to do that?

Group Director, Children's Services:

Yes.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I ask you to be as brief as possible because there is something I want to get in if there is time?

Group Director, Children's Services:

Yes. Okay, so from last November we implemented a new case management record-keeping system. It also has pretty good capability for performance and management reporting. We did not have that before. We had a system that was very poor where information could be overwritten; it was a really antiquated system. I had never seen anything like it, nor had anybody who came here. It was completely not fit for purpose. We have also a much more robust system of quality assurance with management oversight. So recently Ofsted came out and looked at the system. We discovered that some people had some things in the wrong place so we could not pull it through very quickly. That has been addressed. We are still in the first 12 months of implementation so there is still ongoing work to develop the system, but the difference that will make is quite significant.

[11:30]

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Just very quickly on that, what are you going to do about the inaccurate information? There are, in some people's files, things that cannot be justified. It is just an opinion, not based on evidence, not based on anything. What are you going to do to try and sort those out?

Group Director, Children's Services:

I think where we know there are factual inaccuracies what we would do is not delete that information, because you should not be able to delete records, but what you do is you add an addendum that sits alongside that corrects anything. When you then get into analysis or assessment where people have a differing view, and sometimes people will say it is inaccurate, there is then a difference of opinion that should be recorded that there is a difference. We need to be absolutely much better. On our assessment you have a point where it says: "What is the child's view of this? What is the parents' view of this?" So you should be able to record that. But factual inaccuracy is different from a different view about an analysis of a set of circumstances.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Thank you for the answer. Just one final thing here, and I have been asking these questions elsewhere. There were 6 people who were suspended from Health and Social Services and who were either named in the care inquiry or were not named but there was supposed to be an investigation into whether they should be reinstated or whatever. First of all, have any of you been involved in it? Do you know who made the decisions as to whether they should come back and how many have come back?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

I was not involved.

Group Director, Children's Services:

I am not sure if we would normally discuss that here.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

None have been named or anything else but it is just a general thing here.

Group Director, Children's Services:

I think the very fact you have said that people have been named in the report ...

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Not all names.

Group Director, Children's Services:

... might identify them. Okay, so investigations were carried out and they are now concluded.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Who carried them out?

Group Director, Children's Services:

There were differing people from across the States. I could not give you the names, Deputy Higgins, off the top of my head. I am not trying to be obstructive.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Okay, thanks.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Perhaps that is something we could come back to. I am conscious that we have run out of time. There was one quick question I wanted to ask which I added as we have gone through. If you do not mind me asking one quick question, it is the Chairman's right, so to speak. Do you think that charging children on this Island £12.50, who are E.U. (European Union) nationals, to be part of this Island is putting children first?

The Minister for Children and Housing:

This has not been discussed at the Council of Ministers so I will give you my personal view on this. I cannot, in my conscience, find a justification for that. I am not comfortable with charging children based on their E.U. nationality a fee for special status. I believe that, as corporate parents, we value each child in this Island equally no matter where they were born and what their nationality is, and where there is a cost associated with supporting children I believe that cost should be taken by the whole community and not just those who are directly affected. That is my personal view.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Thank you.

The Minister for Children and Housing:

Chairman, I know there was on the list asking about key worker accommodation. Just so you know, this was raised at the quarterly hearing with the Minister for Children and Housing on Tuesday, who gave an excellent response to it. **[Laughter]** It can be found on the States website, since we have run out of time today, to view those answers.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

We should have ended just before that. **[Laughter]** Is there anything else anyone wants to say? I think we have had a robust discussion. Thank you for your time. Thanks to all the panel and members of the public for being here. I think we can conclude the meeting now. Thank you very much.

[11:34]

