



Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Children and Families

Thursday, 13th November 2025

Panel:

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

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville (Vice-Chair)

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade

Witnesses:

Connétable R.P. Vibert of St. Peter, The Minister for Children and Families

Deputy M.R. Ferey of St. Saviour, Assistant Minister for Children and Families

Mr. K. Posner, Interim Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills

Ms. D. Marriott, Director of Children's Services

Mr. A. Heaven, Assistant Director of Policy

[13:59]

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

Welcome to this quarterly hearing of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. Today is 13th November. I would like to draw everyone's attention to the following. This hearing will be filmed and streamed live. The recording and transcript will be published afterwards on the States Assembly website. All electronic devices, including mobile phones, should be switched to silent. We have 1½ hours for this hearing. I am Deputy Catherine Curtis, the chair of the panel.

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

Connétable Mark Labey from the parish of Grouville, vice-chair.

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade:

Deputy Helen Miles, panel member.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Richard Vibert, the Minister for Children and Families.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Deputy Malcolm Ferey, Assistant Minister for Children and Families.

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

I am Keith Posner, Interim Chief Officer at C.Y.P.E.S.

Director of Children's Services:

Donna Marriott, Director of Children, Young People and Families.

Assistant Director of Policy:

Andrew Heaven, Assistant Director of Policy.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you, everyone. I have some questions first of all around independent advocacy. Minister, could you briefly outline the rationale for introducing the independent advocates regulations at this stage?

[14:00]

The Minister for Children and Families:

Independency advocacy is something that we value and something that should be available to children. Listening to their voice is important in everything we do in children's services and we know that children have better outcomes if they are given that option and they are able to talk to somebody independent who is able to put forward their views, also perhaps if they have got any issues. The importance of putting it in statute is that at the moment the service exists but it is not statutory. Putting it into statute means that it has to be funded in the future and it cannot be removed. I suspect the only way you could remove it is going back to the States Assembly and trying to rescind the law, and I think that would be a difficult thing to do. I think it gives people confidence that we value the service and that it is always going to be available.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

This is for children with health or development needs and for care leavers; is that right?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, as well as the children in care, yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

And children in care.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Potentially for some of them it would be available up to 25, I would think, yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

For care leavers up to 25?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Minister, could you inform the panel how the appointment process for independent advocates will be managed? What safeguards will be in place?

The Minister for Children and Families:

We have gone through that process. There was a comprehensive commissioning process, which resulted in the appointment of 2 service providers. One will offer services primarily to looked-after children and care leavers, while the other will focus on children with health and development needs and those with safeguarding arrangements in place. The advantage of that is we have a single provider and if for any reason they should cease to provide that service, we have a back-up. In fact, prior to becoming a statutory service, we did at one point ask one of the other providers to cover some of the services of another one while they did not have the resources to carry out sufficient advocacy. I think it is very important not to choose one provider.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

There is that back-up in place. Do you know what safeguards they have in place for their advocates, whether there is any criminal records or what training they have?

The Minister for Children and Families:

They would all have to have criminal record checks. They would have to have a D.B.S. (Disclosure and Barring Service). I assume in fact it would be like an advanced D.B.S. Are you able to help?

Director of Children's Services:

Yes. That would be obviously down to the advocacy providers in their safe recruitment processes but as part of the contracting we will have done with them, we will require them to use safe recruitment processes. We would require things like for them to have satisfied themselves that D.B.S. has taken place. The same as probably across government, if you were to have someone where there was some kind of positive D.B.S. you would expect there to be a proper risk assessment around what that might mean. Sometimes people can have convictions from a long time ago or things like that, so you would expect the provider ... that would be the same for any of our providers that we have got contracts with to follow good, safe recruitment due process around it.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. So that is set in guidance or in concept?

Director of Children's Services:

I have been involved in the advocacy contracting, so that will be built into our contract rules and terms and conditions that are in there, that are set into there. I think we have strengthened the contracting this year quite a lot.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Minister, could you explain how the advocacy services will be promoted to qualifying individuals?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes. We pass the information to the providers for every child and then they are able to contact them. We also make all those in care aware of the existence of the service, so I think as things currently stand, every young person in care has been made aware of the service.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

What about those children with health and development needs? Will they or their families know?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Absolutely, yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

How will they know?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Through the inclusion project at the Jersey Youth Service, those youth workers are trained to direct people to those type of services when there is an identified need.

Assistant Director of Policy:

I think the other part of that, if I may, Minister, is we, from our government services, those referrals, for want of a better description, are made and we have got some really good high figures that show that when a child is coming into care there is an opportunity that a referral is made to the relevant advocacy service. Also as part of that contracting, the advocacy service will also be required to tell us their activity, the number of children who they are advocating for, if you like. Between the 2, you get an understanding of the uptake. The other thing to add and just share is it is not just a one-off process. That child coming into care may not ... it might be all too much at the first instance: "I do not want another person in my life, thank you very much", but they will continually be offered and then there is an opportunity for them to take it up at any time. I just wanted to underline that.

The Minister for Children and Families:

When we checked it quarterly, every child in care had been referred to the service.

Director of Children's Services:

If you are happy for me to add as well, because I think you are talking about the broader children in need group. Those children are a child in need and they have got a child protection plan. There is a process where that happens that their families are advised of that at the front end of that intervention and that the advocacy providers require they get the referral. They know that that young person is open to the service and then they would try to make contact. Obviously it is led by families, by children about whether they want it.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you for that. Minister, could you outline how the code of practice will be developed and what role it will play in guiding the duties and conduct of advocates?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Okay, so that is the important part of this service. The code of practice obviously gives guidance on the role and function of the advocacy work and publishing a code of practice is another requirement of the Children and Young People (Jersey) Law, so we have to do it by law. The code of practice has been co-created by a working group, which included representatives of Jersey advocacy providers: Jersey Cares, Barnardo's and My Voice. It was also subject to legal review. The code sets out guidelines for advocacy service providers as well as the independent advocacy themselves. It sets boundaries on advocacy practice, guidance on important issues such as conflict of interest and non-instructed advocacy. Non-instructed advocacy is whereby the child is unable to express

their own wishes, feelings or preferences due to their age, disability, communication difficulties or perhaps some other impairment. They have a voice even though they may not be able to express all their wishes themselves. It sets out the eligibility criteria for independent advocates, including the requirements for qualification and training, which we covered earlier. It sets out the advocacy provider's obligations to ensure that relevant training is available to all their staff and appropriate safeguarding and data protection policies.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That is good. Will there be any need to look at it again to see if any revisions are necessary later on or not?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I would have thought that we have to from time to time review it. Although I do not have the timescale on review, I would think it has to be reviewed from time to time.

Assistant Director of Policy:

We only just published it in September 2025. I think the Minister is quite right. As our advocacy services gain in terms of improvement in their consistency and quality there may well be issues that come up that we need to include here. As the Minister has alluded to, we have done our best in terms of working with advocacy providers to make sure that the code of practice is grounded in the realities of providing that service but I have no doubt that there will be a time and a policy where it will need to be reviewed.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think you are right, as a statutory service it is entirely new. We had it as a service before. I think we have learnt a lot, particularly about referrals and how that process should work. Having it as a non-statutory service certainly helped us learn the way but as a service bound in law it is new and I think possibly somewhere it should state how often we would review that policy.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you. I was going to ask about continuity of advocacy support, how that will be maintained in cases where an advocate's appointment is terminated or the contract ends. I know you have already mentioned there are 2 services, so there is a back-up, but are there particular plans or guidance about how to manage when an advocate leaves?

The Minister for Children and Families:

It is set out in the regulations the arrangement for when a period of advocacy ends and that could be because, as you say, the service provider for some reason is unable to continue. The key

presumption is that the offer must always be open to all the eligible young people and we obviously come back to having 2 providers. It is also a presumption that when closing down an advocacy contract with a young person, we must provide a period for both parties for the contract to end. The only time when that would not happen is, as we have said, if somebody suddenly said: "We are going to cease offering this service." The regulations provide that an advocacy arrangement is terminated either by the independent advocate themselves or by the service provider or the Minister, that a replacement is appointed and that either the Minister or service provider must take all reasonable steps to inform the qualifying individual about the details of their replacement. Therefore, we are bound in law to provide a replacement.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you for that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I have got some questions about the U.N.C.R.C. (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) because you appointed the commencement date on 15th October. Please, Minister, can you outline the progress made since the duty to have due regard for children's rights came into effect for Ministers and States Assembly bodies in January 2024?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Some of the things that I have got here obviously predate that. We have had the prohibiting of physical punishment for children, creating a legal framework for the Children's Commissioner, introducing a new children's and young people's law, amending the Civil Status (Jersey) Law, which is a current one, amending the legislation to further protect women and girls - that to some extent is ongoing that some of that is in there - and regulations that affirm the statutory rights to an independent advocate, which we have just covered. The impact is that our senior officers and leaders now have a clearer understanding of their responsibilities for safeguarding, as a corporate parent and there is a better communication between the agencies that look after our most vulnerable children. It is positive and it is a continuing process of improvement.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Lovely, thank you. You talked about the partners who are delivering services for you. Can you tell us how public authority duty bearers such as charities and arm's length bodies and the parishes are being supported by your department to prepare for the extension of the law to them in January?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Over the last 6 months officers have engaged with representatives of all public authorities named in the law and that includes the Comité des Connétables and the parish secretaries. I can certainly

say that my parish secretaries have been supported and have been involved in discussions and training. I assume that has been the same for the other arm's length organisations and charities.

[14:15]

The Children's Rights Scheme acts as statutory guidance published under the law and designed to support all duty bearers in exercising their due regard duty. We will be issuing a slightly revised version of the guidance ahead of this phase 2 enactment, which is fairly imminent. We also provide all public authorities duty bearers with a template and guidance document to assist them with preparing children's rights impact assessments. Officers in the children's policy team are ready to provide support via a dedicated email address. I know there is something because I know that our parish secretaries ... it is in here but they also have 2 online learning modules. I am aware of that anyway because our parish ... yes, here we are. They have been doing that, so that is available. Officers are working to investigate. They are rolling out these modules but I know that our people are already aware of them and I think may already have looked at one of them, so that is in place as well.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

It is good stuff. There is lots going on, basically.

The Minister for Children and Families:

There is a lot going on, yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes, that is good.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think we have prepared people properly for this.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

In terms of compliance with the duty to have due regard, how will your department monitor that across the different duty bearers and what accountability mechanisms will be in place?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Overall responsibility for exercising the duty of care rests with the duty bearer but in the case of Ministers and elected Members, they can be challenged on the floor of the Assembly if they lodge a proposition relating to a matter that would affect children without, for instance, publishing a C.R.I.A. (Children's Rights Impact Assessment). Such a challenge could result in a reference back. I might

have to get further information on how we monitor the other ... or there is monitoring for the other bodies.

Assistant Director of Policy:

The policy intent was to give the responsibility for monitoring the C.R.I.A. that happen in the Assembly to those duty bearers themselves. There is no reference in the conventionalised law of a person or an individual or a department who is assigned a quality assurance role. It is much very among peers and that is the position to date. The Children's Commissioner's Office is a friend to the process and is supportive generally and can provide advice and guidance generally. We have also provided and tried to train those people who support Ministers and elected Members so that they feel supported in bringing this forward. On reflection and thinking about the journey that we have been on in the first 18 months, 2 years, there has not been a lot of challenge specifically around the C.R.I.A. where Members have put a C.R.I.A. forward and that may be something to think about and think about whether we can do more in that space.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think we may see more now that there is a sort of reflection on how the law should be applied. You may get something coming forward where it says there is no children's impact but there is and that will be challenged, so I think it is more likely we will get challenges now than we did in the past.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Have you got any examples of where the law has already influenced policy?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I have got a couple I think. One that has been cited a few times is the one on the carbon neutral roadmap. That certainly impacts children and young people and their future. That C.R.I.A. was part of the original process but it has been updated now twice to reflect changes in the policy area. The first iteration was published in 2021 and then there have been 2 further updates and it shows that the C.R.I.A. is a live document and should be updated as we gather more information or as things develop to reflect any changes. That is a good one. The other one was a recent one with the Minister for Housing's residential tenancy law and I think that had a big impact on children and there was a very good example of a C.R.I.A. in that one. It looked at assumptions relating to evictions and how that had an impact on children and their future. So I think those are 2 good examples.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you very much.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Minister, I am going to ask a few questions now on the Children and Civil Status Consequential (Amendments) (Jersey) Law. Can you provide the panel with an update, please, of the status of this, including whether it has received Royal Assent and when it is expected to come into force?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I am pleased that it has gone through the process and in fact I have signed a Ministerial order to bring the law into force on 24th November. As you know, the law ensures that all children, regardless of how they were conceived, and their families will have the same rights as each other, and I think that is incredibly important. We have moved from a point where the law just considered there was one type of couple, a mixed sex couple, to the modern world where there are a number of different variations. We have got same sex couples, we have got surrogacy and these things were not recognised. The U.K. (United Kingdom) law had moved faster than us over the years and it was high time that we came up to date and I am very pleased that we have been able to do that.

The Connétable of Grouville:

What practical and operational changes are being implemented across relevant departments and services to support the delivery of the new provision introduced by the law?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Let us look at, for instance, at the Superintendent Registrar because come 24th November I believe they have got a waiting list of people who want to take part. They are able to provide new certificates. There is a new registration process. They have trained staff ready to implement the new procedures. They have updated their webpage and they are trained to manage the enquiries from parents, which are going to come in fairly quickly after that implementation date. For the courts, there are new court rules. We have parental orders, which for the first time will be recognised in our courts. There is also a process by which U.K. parental orders will now be recognised. The court again has had to develop new forms and procedures and obviously undergo training for their staff. J.F.C.A.S. (Jersey Family Court Advisory Service) has developed a guidance to support the parental orders. Then you look at places that you would not immediately think of but obviously it is another form of conceiving ... the Assisted Reproduction Unit. It has new parental consent forms because only those births through a recognised reproduction unit will be able to register the births as having both parents on there. If it is done in a less formal form, there is no certainty as to who the parent might be. People are obviously advised to always use the Assisted Reproduction Unit. Children's Services have new guidelines on parental responsibility and staff have received a briefing. We have had government communications to raise awareness. Then there is also the surrogacy guidance, where we come back to parental orders where, of course, for the first 6 weeks the surrogate has parental responsibilities and then once the parental order is in place, that all transfers to the new parents.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you, Minister. My question, strangely enough, was about surrogacy.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Sorry, I have ...

The Connétable of Grouville:

I think you have answered that. You used an acronym there J.F.C.A.S. Could you just for the cameras for the public tell us what that stands for, please?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Jersey Family Court Advisory Service.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you very much.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I have some questions now about children in care of the Minister and children who have been adopted as well. Minister, could you outline what post-adoption support is currently available for parents and guardians in Jersey and how this support meets the long-term needs of adopted families?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Post-adoption support is offered to every local adopter who has adopted children here in Jersey and the support can range. There is a range of service from one-off telephone support to offer advice and reassurance to more in-depth pieces of work, which are allocated to an adoption social worker or the adoption family support worker. How we determine the support that is needed by adopters is obviously after the initial contact we can assess the level of support that is required and there are 2 types of post-adoption support that are offered. That includes direct work with adopters offering our own expertise around issues such as trauma, therapeutic parenting approaches, attachment routines, how to utilise support networks, confirming aspects of family history, details from records and providing counselling around this where needed. We do endeavour to deliver as much support as we can in-house. However, there are times we need to support families to make referrals to the Children and Families Hub - this is where the second options are - and signpost to other appropriate agencies such as C.A.M.H.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service), Social Security and specialist services in counselling.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

How long is this support available for? Is it throughout the child's time of growing up or is it just for a short period?

The Minister for Children and Families:

As far as I know, adopters can look for support at any time during the adoption, yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

If everything is fine and then the child as a teenager needs some extra support, that is still available?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, so it is similar to the support offering.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Would the adopter family know who to contact if they had not asked for any support for a number of years?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I would hope they would come to Children's Services and we would quickly ensure that they received the appropriate support in the same way as they did when they made first contact with us.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Do you think there is sufficient support around early trauma that a child might have experienced?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I cannot believe that that would not be a key part of it because many of our children have experienced trauma and in fact just the fact that they have come up for adoption is traumatic in itself. I think that is a key part of any service that we offer. Is there anything you can add?

Director of Children's Services:

It is not specific to adoption but it will go across the whole system. We are just in the process currently of looking at trying to procure trauma-informed training across the whole system. We are trying to line up with schools and all different parts of the child system, social care, through the judiciary as well as part of the Family Justice Council, so that probably across all of the agencies we have a more uniformed approach to how to respond to trauma for children and that training offer would be a widespread one, which will help. Where the adoption team is, it is only a tiny team but that team, as part of the new model of the work, will have access to psychology input and that would be able to advise those adopters and provide support around how to respond to trauma and children's attachment and experiences and things like that.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thank you.

Director of Children's Services:

That offer will get better I think as time goes on. It is probably not as developed yet as we want it to be.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Is there something with C.A.M.H.S. where we offer parenting was for ...

[14:30]

Director of Children's Services:

Yes, we are already offering quite a lot of courses that you could access through the Early Help Hub. C.A.M.H.S, the children in care psychology offer will be for fostering and adoption as well. We are just in the process of strengthening it, knowing it needs to offer more going forward; that work is well under way. Yes, it should be much more strengthened as a result than what it has been historically.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you.

Director of Children's Services:

It is already probably offering more than what it was.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. I just have a few questions about children who have been placed off Island. Minister, could you inform the panel what specific support is offered to the families, say they might be the birth families, for example, of children who have been placed off Island and how their ongoing needs are monitored and addressed?

The Minister for Children and Families:

For children who are placed in the U.K. for whatever reason, parents are supported to maintain contact with their children, which is particularly important. That includes support with travel to the U.K. and to support for overnight stays to make and sometimes longer in order that they can make contact with their children. There is also support activities with the children. Those visits can also include siblings where relevant and appropriate. Of course we have also got, as we had come back

to it, the independent advocacy service for those children who are placed in care or fostered off Island.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Those trips to the U.K., is that funded as well for people if they ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, that is funded, yes, and it can be funded for the siblings as well. I think we pay for, in effect, if they make a family trip to somewhere there.

Director of Children's Services:

Yes, it is always driven by the care plan for the child. Whatever in practice or operationally is, whatever the child's care plan is, often they will be core care plans. It will say how much contact there will be per year and we would help to facilitate that, recognising there is distance. Yes, we would fund flights and ability to get to where they need to and, potentially, activities to make that happen.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Another question about children placed in the U.K., could you explain how Jersey Children's Services work in partnership with U.K. children's services and agencies to support the children placed in the U.K., particularly in relation to safeguarding, to their education and well-being?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Okay. Jersey Children's Services engage with relevant local authorities when a child is placed in the U.K. and that includes notifying the relevant authority if a child from Jersey is placed in the area so that relevant authority is aware that they have a vulnerable child in that area. I think there is additional engagement that may take place and I think in every case we would have a contract with the ...

Director of Children's Services:

Sorry, because it is quite operational, is it not? So that the ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

They have a duty of care, the local authority has a duty of care. I know that we have not managed as yet to sort out the statutory, the law that ensures that that is in place but they do have a ...

Director of Children's Services:

There is a safeguarding worry.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Director of Children's Services:

If a child has had a safeguarding worry in an area that the local responsibility is with the local authority, when we set the placement arrangement up with whatever the provider is - maybe it is a children's home or a foster care association or whatever it is - we would work with that provider to make sure that the child's education, their health needs and that is all part of setting up that contract to make sure that the right things are in place. Sometimes that can be challenging, the same as here, depending on the child's level of need. But that is the work that they would do as part of that contract arrangement, to make sure we get schools set up, that our health provider here makes sure they get the health assessments and they get the right access to healthcare. All of those things are part of the placement agreement that the social worker goes out and does when the child is first placed as well.

The Minister for Children and Families:

What we have also done is we have got an arrangement with Medway now, who do the work on our behalf. We have got a contract with Medway Council to undertake those U.K. placement searches for children who require specialist care that is not available on the Island. They do some of that initial work for us in finding that specific care and ensuring that that is the right care for the child. We have a direct contact with them now.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

There is Medway involved, there is the local authority involved. In Jersey who has the ultimate responsibility in relation to something like the ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

It stays here.

Director of Children's Services:

We do.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Still the ultimate responsibility.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Still ours, so ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. You have covered some of this I think really ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

Our social workers visit ...

Director of Children's Services:

Regularly, yes.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, regularly.

Director of Children's Services:

They are advocates.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We know that the education is taking place.

Director of Children's Services:

Yes. If there is a challenge with education, the same as here, you would be working with trying to make that happen and looking at what the alternatives are around it because some children need different arrangements. Some placements might involve education as part of it, it might be specialist residential school. It just depends; every child has got a different care plan.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. My next question, I think you may have something else to add to this but I wanted to ask about the formal protocols or agreements in place to ensure continuity of care for those children placed outside the Island. Is there anything else to add to what you have already said?

The Minister for Children and Families:

That is under the U.K. Children Act 1989 to recognise our care orders that we have made. Unfortunately, we are still at a point where we were when we last met and spoke about this with the Department for Education in the U.K. We are constantly pushing to get this resolved but the hold-up is there. They have vast amounts of legislation. We have not dropped the ball at this end but we are very much dependent on them.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Okay, I have got one more question I think. Concerns have been raised with the panel from several families who foster and have adopted about the current availability of support for children with F.A.S.D. (Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder). Are there any other assessments going on now? I know there was something set up but I believe the doctor may have not been here, I cannot remember right now. Is there still available the support for F.A.S.D. and the assessments?

The Minister for Children and Families:

That is Foetal Alcohol Syndrome?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes.

The Minister for Children and Families:

There is certainly support.

Director of Children's Services:

Is this off Island are you talking about or on ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

No, this is locally.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes.

Director of Children's Services:

Yes, we have got the C.A.M.H.S. service that obviously are developing their expertise around F.A.S.D. and ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I was not sure if that had come to a stop for some reason. This is what we were concerned about.

The Minister for Children and Families:

No, no.

Director of Children's Services:

Not aware of it, no.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We can look into it if there is an issue but ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can you perhaps follow up in writing in regards to that if that is okay? Yes.

Director of Children's Services:

Yes, I am not aware of that.

The Minister for Children and Families:

If this is an issue you are ahead of us because we have not had that raised that I am aware of.

Director of Children's Services:

No, I have not.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It is about support and assessments. Perhaps if you can get back to us that would be good.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes, yes. Thank you. Thank you, Chair. The next set of questions are about the Play Strategy.

The Minister for Children and Families:

If I can ask Malcolm, it is his forte.

The Connétable of Grouville:

I am sure. Assistant Minister, could you update the panel on any progress made toward the development of a Play Strategy since its initial announcement?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes. The Play Strategy is now in final form almost. We plan to have it ready by the end of November and publish it mid-December after all the budget stuff is done and dusted. There is a nice synergy with Christmas and children, so I think it would be a nice opportunity to get the Play Strategy out; that is the plan for publication.

The Connétable of Grouville:

You need to grow a bigger beard.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Put some weight on.

The Connétable of Grouville:

We understand that there is no specific budget allocated for the creation and implementation of the Play Strategy. What challenges, if any, do you perceive has that created when developing the draft strategy?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes. I think the strategy is a vision, it is what we would like to achieve. It is how we would like all children to develop and play. But what we are doing in terms of making sure that the strategy is something that drives forward change is we will be changing someone's job profile next year so that they will be able to give more time to develop the actions from the strategy. The challenge always is around funding because otherwise it is just a wish list. But the strategy also incorporates really good things that are happening right now, not least the new Youth Centre in Ann Street and not least some of the other play parks that have opened up recently and how well they are working for young people. All of these things are an iterative process, but my main focus is to make sure that we keep that alive by dedicating more of an officer time to it next year.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Clearly we have just published our online harms report.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Exactly.

The Connétable of Grouville:

One of the conclusions of which was the fact that if children did not spend so much time online they would not have so much to worry about.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

I am glad you brought that up. I must admit I did not have an opportunity to read all of your report, Chair. But if I look at recommendation 27, which exactly stipulates what you have just said, Connétable, and if I just briefly give you an excerpt from my foreword on the Play Strategy. It says: “Barriers such as limited availability and accessibility to play spaces, safety concerns and increasing influence of digital engagement mean that children today may not experience the same freedoms to play as previous generations did. This Play Strategy addresses these concerns by squarely setting out tangible actions to ensure that real-life play is positioned as a positive and productive alternative to screen time, is accessible to all and that our communities are built with play in mind.” That is the vision and that very much chimes with recommendation 27. It is good to see that we are aligned, not least on that.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I do not know how other developments are going but certainly the one in St. Peter, the 130 houses, because we have a Play Strategy a lot of work has gone into developing the play area and they have obviously liaised with us, which would not have happened otherwise. Although we have not got a budget, we are making a difference. I have got to thank Malcolm for that and the one member of staff that you have ...

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, that is it.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can I just say that recently Lord David Blunkett was in the Island?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I asked him what would he do about the problem with online harms. He said 2 things he thought of immediately, one of them is a lot more play areas and places for young people to go.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

There you go.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

The second one was for adults to not be on their phones all the time and be a good example.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

That is right, it is setting a bad example.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes, that is true in so many ways. Indeed just for the recording is the fact that we on the Planning Committee have seen a lot more play areas come forward in planning stage. We are very pleased and proud that that is now ongoing. The other thing I would just like to ask with regards to the Play Strategy is explain how children, families and relevant stakeholders are being engaged in shaping the content and priorities of the Play Strategy.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes. One of the things that we did, we always wanted to include young people in this of course but we are always mindful that they had been asked a number of times in the past. The message that we got from them quite strongly is you have us enough times, please do get on with it. What we did was when we had the first draft of the strategy we took it to the Schools Network Council and we had a child-friendly version which we called the Play Plan, which I think is a nicer title in some ways, a nice little alliterative ring to it. What those children and young people told us was, yes, we hear what you are trying to achieve, please get on and do something. They gave us some really good feedback on the child-friendly version in terms of disability and in terms of the characters that were involved, pictorially in the plan, things that we really had missed. That was really rewarding to get their feedback. We are also producing a short film on the Play Plan and the narrative is going to be undertaken by a number of children who put their names forward following the presentation from the Minister and me that day at Schools Network Council. That is a really positive way that they can feel engaged and that little piece of film will be there in adding an item.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Excellent, excellent.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you. I just had some questions about the children's short breaks service. You told us, I think, last time that there is a review and I just wondered if you could provide us an update of the progress on the review.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Children's short breaks service, there is a review and, unfortunately, for the service it has had many reviews. It is always a worry to me that we are doing the best we can with what we have available, but it is a service that, despite all those reviews, we know that there is certainly more work to be done.

[14:45]

We have looked at the analysis and recommendations. We have engaged with parents, carers, children, young people to ensure that recommendations accurately reflect the needs of children and young people. Feedback that we have had, sadly, is not positive and it does sadden me that over half rated the experience as poor or very poor. It is a service that we know we have got work to do. We have the 2 short-break homes, Eden and Oakwell. There is a review under way there as part of the wider reform of our residential estate. It is part of that big residential review reform programme. Those 2 houses will receive work. Oakwell recently opened a new specialist equipped garden and the other home was recently fully refurbished. Again, there is a commitment to fully utilise bed capacity at each home and to offset sessional non-overnight short breaks, therefore increasing the number of families benefiting from the service. The review has made recommendations as to staffing-established management structure and rota principles required to fulfil our commitment. As I have said, it is sad that we are in a position where that part of the service is seen as poor. We are doing as much as we can with what we have but I am still ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

You have said there about over half of families saying it is poor or very poor. What exactly is it that families are telling you is not right with the service?

Director of Children's Services:

Do you want me to step in?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Director of Children's Services:

Yes, I think the challenge that we have is there is not enough resource. Families want more and it to be directed the way that they want it, really seems to have been the review that has happened to date. There has been a lot of review work. I think what we have not done historically is moved into that becoming a plan with proposals for action and that is the work we are doing now. Rather than going back and spending a whole year doing a whole review, we are pulling together all of the analysis work that has happened over the last couple of years. There has been quite a lot of work, is pulling that together and getting some more updated engagement. To get that done I think ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I think you told us last time that you had a project lead for this.

Director of Children's Services:

We have got that, yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay.

Director of Children's Services:

The project lead has been appointed ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

When was that project lead appointed?

Director of Children's Services:

Only just. We got the agreement to put the funding in to support the post. We have recruited 2 and that person started just the last weeks, but we have started the work already in the background without that person in place.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

When are we likely to see the plan?

Director of Children's Services:

We have just put the project underneath my programme board so that it does get properly programme-managed going forward. Proposals that that analysis is pulling together should be done by the end of February. That will give us the opportunity to then set out the plan from there; that will set up the programme of what it will look like going forward. It will probably take us time to implement because we are going to have to go out and look at the whole of commissioning of short breaks and all of the contract and arrangements across the system.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

That probably does not give a lot of comfort to parents who are listening who are absolutely desperate for a short break.

Director of Children's Services:

Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Clearly you have missed the budget allocation for this year.

Director of Children's Services:

Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Realistically, when will parents start to feel a difference?

Director of Children's Services:

I think the residential short breaks review will help us to look at that offer that is in there. We know that we are not offering as much as we could within the resource we have available and we need to reconfigure what we have got. We could increase the offer without having to wait for more money for things like that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay. I think that is the first time that you have acknowledged that to the panel.

Director of Children's Services:

Yes, okay.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I do not think that was the message you gave us last time. I think the message we were getting last time was there is nothing to see here. I think it is ...

Director of Children's Services:

I think we have said consistently we know.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Maybe not from you but we did hear that there was no waiting list. That is what we have heard.

Director of Children's Services:

That is different.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think in doing the review of the reviews in effect brings it to the fore that we really have to ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes. I just appreciate your honesty.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, we have to be honest and it is ...

Director of Children's Services:

Just to clarify though, there is 2 bits there. I think we think there should be a broader offer. My view, as the director, is the short-breaks offer in those homes is not as extensive as ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

As they could be.

Director of Children's Services:

I think we could mobilise our resource better to offer more. We have not got children waiting to come into that offer, interestingly. What we do not understand is that because people have not felt they could access this, so they have stopped asking.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

They have not asked for it, absolutely, yes.

Director of Children's Services:

We do not know. We have not got a list of people asking.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes, absolutely, yes.

Director of Children's Services:

We have not got people coming but we think we need to mobilise the offer better and then we will be able to stimulate if there is a need. We will be able to stimulate better to get the offer out there. Then that helps us to then look about the broader short-breaks offer. What should that look like?

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, thank you.

Director of Children's Services:

Does that make sense?

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes.

The Connétable of Grouville:

I would also just like to say, since this is a public recording, that we visited, as the panel, both Oakwell and Eden and have found what is available and the work that they are doing is exceptional. I would just like to say that on behalf of the staff that work there.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay. Thank you for that. I think you have probably answered the question about how the feedback from families is being used. It sounds like it is the foundation of what you are going to do moving forward.

The Minister for Children and Families:

It is, yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

You will be addressing the need issue.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay. Just moving on from that, can you tell us how transition planning is being strengthened for children approaching adulthood and what steps are being taken to ensure that there is that continuity of care and support beyond the age of 18?

The Minister for Children and Families:

For those approaching or coming up to the post-18 period, for many children that starts at the age of 14 where all children and young people with additional needs are referred to adult services through the single-point referral. For children open to the complex needs team preparing for adulthood, plans with development again at 14 and they review it at a minimum every 6 months. I think we are doing some further work on this but we have also got those with special education needs. Following a child's 17th birthday, adult services will undertake their own assessment of the need to ensure that appropriate packages of care are in place post-18. These assessments include education, employment, health and well-being, social inclusion and social activities in independent living. There are processes in place. I am aware that this is an area where people have concerns about that transition to 18. I have certainly seen concerns from parents about it.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I think it was one of the things that we picked up when we visited Oakwell, for example.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

What we see is suddenly the child becomes an adult at 18 and, effectively, falls off a cliff.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Cliff edge.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Whereas they were going to Oakwell ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

That should not happen but I think it does.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I think you have clearly articulated the policy and the process.

The Minister for Children and Families:

But I know there are concerns though.

Director of Children's Services:

Yes. There is a working group I think that has started that is being led by adult services who have started to look at some of that. I think some of that is about different things like contracting: how do you get the transitional contracts from child packages up into adults? I think we have definitely got work to do there that will fit into that working group.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

You could say if you go into the transition process at 14, 4 years should be ample time to transition. The day after somebody's 18th birthday should not end them ...

Director of Children's Services:

Not the time to do it, never. Yes, absolutely.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is not the time to do it and also it is not the time for them to be then into the family home which has an impact on parents working, et cetera.

Director of Children's Services:

Agree. I guess there is something there, is there not, about system wide for Children's Services, the quality and the strength of our care planning is not yet where we want it to be? As we get better at that, we will plan earlier. It is across the whole system, planning early enough to get the strength about thinking about what the long-term plan is. We are starting to get better at that. I think we are making much better thinking about when the child is older, how are we going to manage transition to adults? How do we line up with adults earlier and work together to try and think about will our funding options change, care packages look different? You have to have different providers. We have to do that better and I think that is why you need that working group to strengthen that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes. I think the difficulty is that I, and Malcolm indeed as well, have been around this arena for very many years and we hear the same processes and procedures but nothing changes. One of the questions that the panel had was whether you would consider putting in a dedicated transition team whose function was to do transition from children to adults so that there were fewer gaps to fall through.

Director of Children's Services:

I do not know the answer to that, if I am honest with you. I think the work of short breaks, our whole offer for children with additional needs and their care packages needs to be looked at in the round with all our contracting and our commissioning. Then I think you would want to be open about: is that the right plan or something like that an option? We have not started to look at that, if I am honest with you, yet. I think that that would not be something we would say absolutely not to because I think we have to look about what does it need. How would that work in a small service? Would you get enough capacity to make it work successfully? It is an economies of scale thing, but that is not to say I think that that would be a wrong plan either at all. I think it is something that we need to look at the whole of that offer and the whole of that bit of the service and the whole of the care packages around that group of children to make the whole system work.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Does it become more challenging because Children's Services remain with C.Y.P.E.S., as opposed to Health and Social Services? Do you think that has been a barrier?

Director of Children's Services:

Whatever system you work in there are benefits, a gain and there are losses, are there not? What you might gain for moving into health and social care you lose for children's education, the joining up of the day-to-day lived experience. I think there is a bigger loss in some ways, but that is about how you work more effectively across the system. A lot of our work is looking with adult mental

health about our children's and adults' mental health interface, one-age mental health strategy, those things about how we join them up better because the system should help.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

They should.

Director of Children's Services:

That should help us to do it, rather than being a barrier. That is about our system in making that happen, rather than letting the systems get in the way.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, thank you.

The Minister for Children and Families:

That means another area where we do acknowledge that we can do better.

Director of Children's Services:

There needs to be work.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We acknowledge that and we are looking to do work on that. Children's Services is a vast area and, sadly, there are some areas like this where it has been apparent for some time that there is a need to do more work in these areas. We acknowledge that and I think particularly under Donna's leadership we are starting to tackle those areas.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes. I am sure the panel feels that we are very grateful for your honesty, all of you. I am sure we will be revisiting this subject together.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I am going to revisit it right now.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Right now. No time like the present.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I have still got something else I just wanted to ask about that or mention. Also, the Disability and Strategy Action Group have also been looking at this and getting people together from adult services as well to try and see what can be done. What keeps coming up is families saying they just do not know who to speak to when it gets to that point. Even if there was a named officer, if there was someone who they could speak to about this would help enormously.

Director of Children's Services:

Can I help with that? I think there is a lot of work going on in early help in the Children and Families Hub about strengthening the interface with how our department ... people understand what is going on and who to go to, how to get there. There is a lot of work on website development and our services that are available. How people could start to access to see that, that work is under a commissioning team, quite a lot of work going in there to try to create that. It will be easier for you to find your way and navigate about how to get the help you need when you need it.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, and that is through the families ...

Director of Children's Services:

Through our Children and Families Hub, yes, which would be right. Obviously it is the front-facing door of everything. If you have one way in to all of the services you are much more likely to get signposted to the right way once we tidy all of that up.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

But I guess the families we are talking about here are the ones that have social workers already and would not need to start the process again. This is the issue, these are families already with the social workers who do not know how to navigate the system.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

They still do not know.

[15:00]

Director of Children's Services:

That should be the social worker's task.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, it should not be, no.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It doesn't seem to be ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

No, it is something we need to look at then, we need to pick that up and see what is ...

Director of Children's Services:

Yes, I think we need to strengthen all of our work in that space really, yes, meet with the Parent Carer Forum and all of that, it helps.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, I can recall 2 or 3 where people have contacted me and it is about this transition to adulthood. Perhaps it is something we just need to find out why the information is not getting to people, yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, they certainly seem to feel unsupported and not know where to go for help at that stage. Okay. I will just ask some questions now about Putting Children First and the Family Court system. Minister, could you outline how Jersey's Children's Services and the Family Court engage with expert organisations and survivors to ensure that children's voices are heard and that their rights are upheld throughout legal proceedings?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Right. Children's Services, we are involved in issuing public law proceedings for children who require safeguarding, which where a child is at risk or of significant harm and involvement in those children would ... you are looking at how they are, in effect, supported through the ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

How they are supported and how they are listened too as well, how their rights are upheld in the court system.

The Minister for Children and Families:

They have a guardian appointed. In private law proceedings of course they have J.F.C.A.S. who offer welfare and safeguarding. Where we are involved obviously we are supporting those children. In most cases they will already have a social worker. They would have a guardian who would also represent their views. They would have the independent advocates who would also be involved. I would hope that a combination of those ensures that they are supported through those proceedings.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, so there is that support for children but considering children's right as well, we were looking at some changes to the U.K. laws recently, significant reforms to the Family Court system in the U.K. to protect children from abusive parents.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Right, okay. Yes, in the U.K. they will be changing the law so that there is not a presumption of parental involvement in court proceedings. Obviously from a legal perspective I do not know if Jersey law is identical to the U.K. I certainly have concerns where there has been parental abuse, that, in effect, those parents can then appoint their own legal advisers and, in effect, go to court still seeking custody or challenging our request to take those children into care and that does occur and that is a significant concern. I understand why the U.K. are changing that and I think that as a result, Donna has already told me, she is raising that at the next meeting of the Family Justice Council. We are about to raise that because we would want the same to apply here. I have had concerns long before this about that particular aspect.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes. I think particularly this is around children who have a parent who has been convicted of sexual offences or a child who has been conceived through rape as well. There are moves to look at perhaps making changes there.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Absolutely, yes. We are aware of the change in the U.K.

Director of Children's Services:

Could I just add, Minister, I suppose that if it is relevant too, because our law here is very different. I think there is a question that presumption is even in our law like it is in the U.K., so it might not be relevant to us to worry about, but we need to have it checked, so someone is looking at that.

The Minister for Children and Families:

But you certainly do have cases where parents have appointed lawyers who, in effect, the children are being subject to ...

Director of Children's Services:

Yes, but I suppose the presumption law is assuming that the birth father or mother, whoever is the person that is violent or a risk, that there is assumption that they should have contact regardless of whether it is right because it is a presumption, whereas I think we think our law here probably does not carry the same presumption, but we need to have that checked out by the Family Justice Council.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Look into that and check up on it.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, we will, yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Just on a smaller level, when the child has parental contact that is supposed to happen, what happens if the child does not want that parental contact? Are their rights respected to refuse that?

Director of Children's Services:

Do you want me to put that, Minister, because that would not be something that you ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

Their rights would be respected if they did not wish to have contact, yes.

Director of Children's Services:

Yes, I suppose this is about private family law mostly, which often Children's Services will not be involved in, unless there is something really contentious or there is a requirement around assessment, et cetera. The judge should deal with that as part of the family law proceedings. They should determine about risk and about the child's interest and they should take the child's wishes and feelings into account in determining whether or not they feel that contact should be pursued. That is the judge's main job really and they all have a J.F.C.A.S. guardian who will be obviously the person that is supposed to take the child's wishes and feelings and make sure that is weighed up in the proceedings.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Outside of the court system if a child, say in foster care, is adamant they do not want to see a parent, is that respected?

Director of Children's Services:

That would be in a similar way, in an operational practice way every child you would look at. There is always in law that children have a right to have, I suppose, their connections with their family and their birth family always and you have to weigh that up. If a child was saying to us that they did not want to see a parent, depending on their age you would obviously place more or less weight with how that is responded to; that would be part of your assessment. If it was in care proceedings you would expect the court to make a determination on that. Sometimes because a child does not want

that and it is not right for them, the court will determine there is no contact. It is so individual, it would be very difficult to give you a really blunt answer to it; it is so individualised.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

No, that is understandable. We are just trying to understand how much the children's rights are paramount or ...

Director of Children's Services:

They are always paramount but you have to weigh that up. If it is something very contentious, then that would be something that is often determined by a court of law outside of the department's ability. If it was something that you really could not make a decision on, then that may be something that ends up in a court arena for a judge to decide on. We should have all children at the heart of everything we do and then what they feel and they want.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes. Have there been any serious case reviews, Minister, during your term of office?

Director of Children's Services:

Is that this year?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

In the term of office.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Almost 2 years.

The Minister for Children and Families:

It is 2 years, for the last 2 years.

The Connétable of Grouville:

They have been published in the past.

Director of Children's Services:

I do not think there has been a serious case review in the last 2 years.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I do not think they have ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

If there were, they would get published?

The Minister for Children and Families:

They would get published but I do not think there have been. I know there are ...

Director of Children's Services:

Not always, no.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

No, not always published.

Director of Children's Services:

There is not an assumption of publication. Publication is always based on whether it is appropriate and safe to do so. A child may be exposed because of the nature of the small Island. People might know the family. There may be a risk around publication that could expose somebody to a risk of harm. That would always be weighed up.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, but there have not been any anyway during your term of office.

The Minister for Children and Families:

No.

Director of Children's Services:

Yes, we would want to publish if we could and it is ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

The numbers have gone down, have they not, over the years? Yes.

Director of Children's Services:

If it is safe we could ...

Assistant Director of Policy:

An example in the past we have published the learning and so that ...

Director of Children's Services:

No, always.

The Minister for Children and Families:

That has not happened in my 2 years.

Assistant Director of Policy:

No.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, which is a good thing.

Director of Children's Services:

Yes, you would always explore if you can publish. The presumption would be you want to. Then it would be about, is it safe and ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, absolutely safe, totally.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. One last question I think because we are finishing quite early. We have just published our online harms review and we just want to know if you will be able to respond as quickly as possible.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I hope so. I have not finished going all the way through it yet. But as soon as we are able to we will respond. I am sure you will want us to do that as quickly as possible. There is a lot to think about within that report. If you could give us a little time, but I am very pleased that you have done that. I know there are various recommendations that concern me. Obviously we need to consider the implications. I think particularly there is one, is it recommendation number 5 that I am the lead? Personally I do not have a problem with that but if that is going to be the case, then I would want to be assured that I get the support and that I have the right, in effect, level of authority. At the moment the consideration of a new law is in one area. There are other bits that are in Justice and Home Affairs. Yes, I am the Assistant Minister but not necessarily au fait with that. There are bits in Children's Services. If somebody is going to take the lead then they have got to be able to say this is the way I want to have it done, irrespective of which department that particular subjects falls. I have to have discussions with the Chief Minister about that and I have not managed to do that yet.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

No, that would be good. I think all the findings and recommendations, they are intended to be helpful.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, it would be something that we are just hoping that gets on track as soon as possible.

The Minister for Children and Families:

As I say, I am supportive of that idea. It would have to change from the way it is today that different Ministers have got different responsibilities. It has to be brought into one. If we are going to have somebody who is overall in charge then they need to know what they want or what their officers want is what is going to be carried through.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, okay. All right. Unless there are any other questions or anything else to say, that is it. We have got to the end of our hearing.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Thank you very much.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Thank you very much for that. It has been really interesting.

[15:13]