



Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Children and Families

Wednesday, 17th September 2025

Panel:

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

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville (Vice-Chair)

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

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

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

Mr. A. Heaven, Head of Policy

[14:04]

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

Welcome to this quarterly hearing of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. Today is 17th September. We have just started a few minutes late as the Ministerial team has just arrived. 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. I am Deputy Catherine Curtis, the chair of the Panel.

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

My name is Mark Labey, Connétable of Grouville, and I am vice-chair.

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

I am Deputy Porée, panel member.

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade:

I am Deputy Helen Miles, panel member.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Richard Vibert, Minister for Children and Families.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Deputy Malcolm Ferey, Assistant Minister for Children and Families.

Head of Policy:

Andrew Heaven, Head of Policy, Cabinet Office.

Director, Children's Services:

Donna Marriott, Director of Children's Services.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you, everyone. We have got 1½ hours for this hearing. First of all we have some questions about the social work workforce. Minister, could you update the panel on the current staffing composition, including the number of posts filled by permanent fixed term and agency workers and how this compares to levels in May 2025?

Director, Children's Services:

I do not know the May 2025 number but I think it is about 65 per cent were permanent social workers at the time and we are a little bit above that now, somewhere about 69 per cent we are running at, and we have some new social workers permanent that have been recruited that are in the process of onboarding as well.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Perhaps it would be best if we got that in writing after the hearing.

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, we can do that.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you. In the last quarterly hearing on 30th April you informed the panel that there were 49 vacancies across the service and residential. Do you have the current number of live vacancies?

Director, Children's Services:

For residential, I do not, not here but we can give you that. We are probably running about in the region of late 30s, I think, figure but I would need to get it for you for residential.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I have some figures, yes. I have not got the percentage. So we have 133.97 F.T.E.s (full-time equivalents) and then the vacancies are 44.32.

Director, Children's Services:

That is against the new structure that we have got. The actual permanent is here.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, permanent staff is ...

Director, Children's Services:

Ninety-four.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Which section would you say has got the most vacancies? Is it residential?

Director, Children's Services:

Residential services. We have got social work vacancies as well, about 36, but they are covered by agency social workers whereas in our residential establishment our gaps are not covered. We have got some agency, about 15 I think.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Out of 44.32 vacancies, only 16 of those are covered by agency staff.

Director, Children's Services:

In the residential.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We have almost 30 uncovered vacancies in residential.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

All right, if you can follow that up with some of the figures in writing, that would help.

Director, Children's Services:

The biggest strain on the system would be in the residential workforce, hence why we have got our T. and C. (terms and conditions) review underway. It is linked to that.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can you say how many workers the department has converted from agency workers to permanent roles and what barriers are in place to this happening, such as housing, right to work issues, professional registration and things like that?

Director, Children's Services:

I cannot give you the conversion rate here. We can work that out for you, but housing is not an issue for social workers. Obviously they get ... if they move to Jersey, or they lived here obviously, they have licence that comes with that role. We do not onboard from other countries residential childcare workers permanently because they would not get the same licence arrangements, but we have got a piece of policy work looking at that currently. We would provide accommodation for residential childcare officers that are agency that have come to the Island that are helping to fill those gaps for us.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

You mentioned the terms and conditions being looked at.

Director, Children's Services:

Residential workforce, yes. Nowhere else in the workforce, just residential. There has been a review underway for some time that we are hoping to have concluded properly in quarter 4, linked to government funding. Obviously we have got the debate to happen, et cetera, but that review is looking at terms and conditions, the whole system really, the wage structure and the workforce offer and also the training and development, the pathway around training and development in that part of the workforce as well.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That would be interesting to see. Do you think the introduction of the retention payment scheme for social workers has helped? Is there a plan to extend this offer?

Director, Children's Services:

I think it has been helpful, from some of the work that we have done to review it. The offer stopped in ... I just want to get the years right. It finished in 2024, so this year that funding has not been there for the retention scheme for social workers but it was part of the work we have done for the Government Plan for seeking additional funding and that is in the Government Plan to be reinstated for next year, with probably a slightly different arrangement around it with a longer tie-in that would hopefully create better permanency.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Have you examined exit interviews to see what people say is preventing them from transitioning to permanent roles or leaving?

Director, Children's Services:

We have. We do review exit interviews but we have also been looking at stay interviews to try and look at why we think staff are staying with us as well. We have done both, trying to get a better understanding of things that keep people as well what makes them leave. There are various things around leaving, whether it is cost of living. Going home to family is an important thing, so people coming here in a temporary way. A lot of our work in both the work around our residential workforce and the social work workforce is around the new academy and the new approach, which is part of the Government Plan funding request, is really focused on trying to look at getting on-Island recruitment, getting people that come from the Island who are more likely to stay here because they are not drawn back to going back to different countries where they have come from because they are missing family and friends and to try to really, I suppose, generate a trainee pathway. A lot of our work on the workforce that we have been doing, the workforce strategy, is all built on creating those pathways for residential and for social work, so that we create more sustainability in our local communities and with our local people that will help to create the pathway. I am sure that Malcolm does quite a bit through his ...

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

I was going to say if I can just add that the exit interview process is a Government-wide initiative where we try to improve the experience, allowing people to conduct it completely online if they prefer. Of course they will still have access to a face-to-face interview if that is what they want to do but they can raise those concerns in a sort of more detached way and there is plenty of space for free text and then plenty of opportunities for them to follow up and highlight their concerns and those go to the Chief People Officer, who will take those individual concerns forward if necessary.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That is good. Particularly with staff in the residential sector, have any particular issues come up from their exit interviews and so on?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Donna will probably be able to highlight that.

Director, Children's Services:

I am just trying to think. We have not had a lot of leavers in that system. We have got a few. I do not know specifically for the exit interviews for those few that we have got that have been moving through. We would need to come back to you about the specifics around them. What we know from things like our Be Heard survey, we look at things like that, which is a good test of our workforce because we had quite a good return last year. We know that for the residential workforce pay is a significant factor, about feeling valued in that space is a really significant factor. That is why we have commenced the terms and conditions review because we recognise that they are quite low paid compared to some other parts of our system really and when you look across the system. There is a level of discontent in that space, I think, the cost of living and those things.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

They do a demanding job, do they not?

[14:15]

Director, Children's Services:

A really tough job, yes. That is why I think we set up the terms and conditions review for this year and wanting to get that done so we can fully understand how we best retain and support them as well.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. I know you mentioned about for residential staff not being able to easily have people just come into the Island so much for that, but has the department explored international recruitment partnerships, particularly with countries with existing communities coming into Jersey? Has that been looked at?

Director, Children's Services:

We have got a quite significant piece of work going on currently in our workforce strategy across the whole of Children and Family Services to try to get that analysis about what it is we need to do to recruit best across the system. I think what we know is we probably want to connect better with some of our local communities across that diversity as well. We know we have got large

communities that would reflect the staff that work for us as well and the families that we serve, so to try to reach more into those communities. Rather than necessarily going out for international recruitment, I think we have got work to do on-Island and that is the same as what we are trying to do perhaps in relation to foster families as well. We have started to connect with some of our church communities and some of our diverse communities, some Portuguese, et cetera. There is some work going on across the system to understand how we can better do that really.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

You have mentioned that and also a trainee pathway for local residents to maybe work as residential staff or to train as social workers as well. Is there anything else to add to that about getting more people in?

Director, Children's Services:

No. That work is all built into the improvement plan as well and the request for the funding for the business cases is all part of that. It is really about creating like an academy where we have the ability to bring people in before they are qualified and better support them and help them then with the qualification pathway. Whether that is through residential or as a social worker, we will have a pathway into both of those so you can come in as a residential worker but as a trainee and then work through to get your level 3, your level 5 or where you need to go, and in the same way for social workers. So part of the workforce strategy is building all of that together and creating those pathways into different routes really. That is what it will look like. It does not look like it at the moment. We have got some advanced trainee social workers that we have in the system but that is because they have done their assessed year, they are doing their assessed year when they are training. We are thinking about we want to get people earlier.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

What you mentioned about an academy, is that going to have an actual place to it or is it just the idea of the training?

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, it is more of a virtual thing. We bring together the workforce development team in social care and that workforce team has a strategy around it that helps us to say we will recruit this many trainees and this will be their pathway and we will support them through their learning and development pathway and they will come back to do their social work. After they have done their academic training, they come back in and they will do their first year in assessed learning and that is supported by the department and that training team that do the whole system, as it were.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Maybe just before we leave this part, Chair, when it comes to international recruitment, what we are trying to create, of course, is a loving type of home environment. While it is really important that we have the right people with the qualifications and the skills, it is also really important that we have people from the local community and the different communities that that represents so that, firstly, children have continuity in their lives and people understand the local context from the diverse communities that we have got over here.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, of course.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I just wanted to follow up on the social work training because at the moment obviously the social work degree is being delivered through University College Jersey. Is that going to continue or will it be something totally different when you establish the academy?

Director, Children's Services:

That is currently being looked at by the college in terms of the volume of staff, volume of places they offer - and we have only got so much across the whole system; that is adults, children and the whole way to be a qualified social worker - to make that course viable because your need every year is quite ... we are only a small place. That is being reviewed about the sustainability of that. There is no plan for us to change it unless obviously the college was not able to offer it. Also we are trying to look at other routes. Some people might not want to do that full time but there is Open University. So we are starting to look at whether there are funding routes as well to support people so that there is different ways and you will be able to draw a different group of people because some people will come to social work and residential work later in life, they will already have other careers, so trying to spread ourselves wider we are going to more likely get people from a range of different life experiences really. The final degree that is through the college is part of it but that is for them to review about sustainability volume wise.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

We have met a group of the students from the social work degree in the past, who were very committed and getting very good training, I think, a good offer, I think. I was also just going to ask if you could let us know the number of residential workers currently in training, if you know the number who are already doing some training.

Director, Children's Services:

We are supporting ... I do not know the number but there are quite a few staff we have got supporting doing levels 3 and 5, because they are quite extended courses. They are a couple of years as well. That is all part of that review work we have been doing about how to make that offer work best as well, I think.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. If you could follow up in writing with the numbers, that would be helpful.

Director, Children's Services:

On the social work retention.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thanks. I think that is you, Helen.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you. I just have some follow-up questions about the recognition of care orders, Minister. I think you have told us before that our care and supervision orders are not automatically recognised in England and Wales and I think you told us back in June 2024 - so it is a long time ago - that drafting instructions had been sent to the U.K. (United Kingdom) Ministry of Justice in relation to the reciprocal care orders. Can you just update us on what the status is of those arrangements?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes. As you know, this was a recommendation of the U.N. (United Nations) Committee and the Jersey Law Officers' Department and the policy officers are ready to support the law drafting once legal advice is received from the Department for Education. Now, we are in constant dialogue with them. However, there are delays and this is in part due to the fact that the U.K. law drafters are heavily involved in the passage of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, so to some extent the fact that we have not reached the point at which the law changes are being done is out of our hands, unfortunately. In the meanwhile, we have strengthened commissioning and governance arrangements in relation to child placements off-Island in order to mitigate the fact that the law changes have not been possible. Certainly it is not for want of trying. The changes that are necessary, and it is actually the changes are required in the U.K. and what we have to amend, is the Prescribed Orders, Northern Ireland, Guernsey and Isle of Man Regulations 1991 and it is a great shame that for some reason we did not adopt that in 1991 and fell outside of that regulation. So I do hope that the next time we will have made some progress.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I think you told us last time that what needed to happen was the permissive extent clause needed to go in the U.K. Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think I have may have made an error there because what is actually required is a change to this bit of legislation and we need to be included in part of section 101 of the Children's Act 1989. I believe it is changes to those regulations that are required. I think I made an error.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So you are saying that we are sort of at the mercy of the U.K.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We are at the moment at the mercy but it is not for want of constant ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Are you able to give us any sort of timeline at all about maybe when that will be done?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Once they have that Act ... what is it called? The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act, once that is through the ... I think it has still to go through the Upper House. Well, I can only hope that in the coming months we will be able to make some progress.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay. What interim safeguards have we got then for our Jersey children who are in care in the U.K.?

The Minister for Children and Families:

There is a duty of care by the U.K. authorities for any child, so in fact as things are at the moment, although it is not in legislation, there is no doubt that should a child go missing in the U.K., then the U.K. authorities will make every effort to find that child as they would do with a child that is actually from the U.K. So there is very little difference. If we consider a child on holiday with its parents, not a U.K. resident, of course, if that child goes missing, the U.K. authorities are going to look for that child and in the same way if a child of ours goes missing from a home in the U.K., the U.K. authorities will automatically look for that child. However, it has not got the strength of legislation behind it.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is the lack of legislation having any issues in terms of the court in terms of making orders for children to go to the U.K.?

The Minister for Children and Families:

No.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So the court is not raising it as a particular issue?

The Minister for Children and Families:

No, not at all, no.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you.

Director, Children's Services:

Can I just add as well I think that probably one of the things to reflect is that in the U.K. all local authorities have a statutory duty to safeguard and protect children in their area. So if they are on your local authority patch and there is a safeguarding concern, you do have a duty. Even though we carry our duty over, obviously for all of those children they remain for us.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Does it cause you a problem with U.K. placements knowing that they are taking children who do not have reciprocal legislation in place or has it never been raised?

Director, Children's Services:

We have not had that as being an issue.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Do you think that is because they do not know?

Director, Children's Services:

I think we always ... as part of your placement plan and the arrangements, you would be thinking about the child lives in a different jurisdiction and trying to set up about what would the safeguarding arrangements be around them. Those children, like the Minister was saying, would be still subject to, if they are missing, obviously the local police. The last time we had a child where there were real concerns, the U.K. police were really ... the Met were really helpful and did really well in helping to mobilise and look for and search. So I think we are confident that that would be followed through. That is probably not the issue that we are ... we have certainly not seen that since I have been here. I do not know about Andrew.

Head of Policy:

Just to reiterate what the Minister said, I think we have hitched our wagon, if you like, of amendment to the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, which is going extremely slowly. It is not complete abandonment in terms of no communication whatsoever. We are in contact, we are in dialogue. That Bill is enormous and it is going extremely slowly. It may be worth saying that the amendment, which it is brought forward under the regulations cited by the Minister, will be narrow in effectiveness and it will be around the recovery of a child from a placement who was taken on a placement unlawfully, which will in effect require the local authorities and police in England to recognise the status of orders made here.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes, so that they have got a legal basis for acting in the way that they have whereas at the moment it is an informal basis, which does leave them open to potential action from parents.

Head of Policy:

Perfect. There is not much reciprocalness in what we are trying to do, so please do not think that there is a block or a going slow because we are asking for something very complicated.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

No, it is just the process.

Head of Policy:

It is just the process. Is that helpful?

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes, very helpful. Thanks very much.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can I just add to that section, if you could let us know how many children have been placed off-Island this year so far?

[14:30]

Director, Children's Services:

2025, yes? Do you want to carry on and I will come back to you?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

This set of questions is with regard to the youth justice and the Greenfields secure accommodation. In the last quarterly hearing you informed the panel that the bedrooms of Greenfields were due to be upgraded and more specifically the removal of the original metal-frame doors that look like cells would be replaced. Can you give us an update on this, please?

The Minister for Children and Families:

We have had to ... I think now some years ago doors were actually ordered. We have had to order new doors because those doors ordered all those years ago are not the right specification, so that is in place and the order has been ... has it been delivered yet?

Director, Children's Services:

It has taken a lot of months of preparation work because the specialist ... what we needed to get it right and there is quite a lot of U.K. learning, so we have been working on the right door because the walls have to be taken out and the steel casing and it is quite complex.

The Minister for Children and Families:

They have had to be laser cut, the walls and the old steel frames taken out, so it is a complex job.

Director, Children's Services:

They have been ordered. Last week we ordered them and they are due on Island I think Christmastime, with the door lasering and the work due to start in the New Year for the doors. That is all in hand and then the rest of the ... so the courtyard has been tarmacked to make it safe and the full work across the courtyard will start in a couple of weeks, I think, October, about the second week in October, and that will include a complete refurb of that area, not just about it making it safe. That will be family space, outdoor ... like a sunken trampoline area. It is some things for young people to do. That will commence ... it has been procured. We are just waiting for that to commence in October for the works to start. The work on the bedrooms, we have ordered all of the secure safe bedroom kits. Young people have been involved in the consultation in that, young people who have been in secure estate, about what that should look like and also the refurb of the secure yard area. All of that has had quite a lot of engagement from young people in the site.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

What about the security system? There is a reference that a biometric security system was going to be brought in.

Director, Children's Services:

We have reviewed that and that is what has made the doors a little bit complicated because we have had quite a lot of connection with some U.K. secure ... there is a new big secure site being built and we have been over to look at one as well and we have been trying to take some of the learning that they have taken. They have been across the whole of Europe looking at doors and security, because they are inextricably linked, and the security system. We have looked at the biometrics and we do not think it is the right thing, so where we have landed now with the finalised plan is we have got some different door systems that have a new updated mag lock system. They are much more secure, much more able to take quite a lot of weight or force and steel lined but we wanted to get away from having like we have got currently, which are cell-like doors, into proper doors that would look nice but also without having to have all keys, bundles of keys. These will work by either a wristband or a fob system and young people will be able to access their own rooms through that without having to have bundles of keys, but there will still be a fallback key system for safety and security. It will not be a biometric system but it will be a specialist security lock system that will be centrally secured through the control room there is on that site.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Sorry to ask, does that mean that you are doing away with the biometric system or you will still implement it?

Director, Children's Services:

We are not going to procure the biometric. We have decided it is not right for what we need. There has been a lot of research; we have spent 9 months trying to get it right to make sure we do get it right, but I think the biometric one is ... there is a lot of potential for things to go wrong. We live on an Island, getting people into Jersey to fix things if they are not an Island-based company ... so we have tried to work with thinking of the lock companies we want to use and the system. We want to reduce the opportunity for things to go wrong and to be sustainable. So that is the work that the team have done and landed on.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Minister, at the last hearing you advised the panel that the development of the inherent jurisdiction unit was expected. Could you please provide an update to the panel on its progress, including any steps taken towards its establishment and anticipated timelines for implementation?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes. Since I spoke last time plans have been drawn up and there is a requirement for bylaw approval for planning. That is currently in progress. The development of the inherent jurisdiction in within the secure home, however, is in a separate area which has its own access and, therefore, somebody in

that will have greater freedom, in effect, but still be secure in terms of the fact that they are unable to leave without staff with them. Unlike somebody who is in the secure unit, they can go out for outdoor activities, go to school and do many of the things that a young person would normally do. Particularly at nighttime obviously the unit is closed, so unlike a children's home where they can leave if they wish to, under an inherent jurisdiction they cannot do that. So it is secure but less secure. Work will commence early in 2026.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Excellent. You also indicated that funding for the inherent jurisdiction unit was being actively sought and that it was included in the plan for in-year allocation. Could you please update the panel on the status of this funding request and whether the necessary resources have been secured?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes. They have Council of Ministers' approval. Of course they are included in the upcoming budget so that is dependent on a vote but I would hope that all Members would support this.

Director, Children's Services:

Some of that has come under our maintenance, some of those things we are funding within our maintenance and our capital work, so not all of it is reliant on the Council of Ministers. Some of it is already underway.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, there is some ... we can use existing ...

Director, Children's Services:

I have already ordered the doors and things, yes, those things are already ...

The Connétable of Grouville:

I know how difficult doors are to get built, believe me. Thank you very much.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

There was also a communication from yourself, Minister, that phase 2 of Greenfields development, which incorporates a school site and a new outdoor space - as I know you have mentioned some of the outdoor spaces - would require a full feasibility study and significant funds. Would you give us a bit more of an update on what has happened since?

The Minister for Children and Families:

So, again, we have Council of Ministers' approval for those funds and it is within this year's budget. That is the final stage; provided Members vote for this, then we have the funding. So it is secured in as far as the Council of Ministers have approved it.

Director, Children's Services:

That is for phase 2 so ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

That is La Passerelle and ...

Director, Children's Services:

... it starts ... 2027, 2028 is further on obviously.

The Minister for Children and Families:

The funding that we had from C.O.M. (Council of Ministers) includes the feasibility study ...

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, for 2027 and then for its commencement, yes.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, for 2027, yes.

Director, Children's Services:

So it is a bit further forward because we are going to need to do all the other work this year.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

With regards to the 2 interim accommodation properties that will be refurbished to help address the current bed shortage and support on-Island consistency, would you be able to give us an update on that refurbishment, please?

The Minister for Children and Families:

So we had the refurbished Field View property opened in April this year and that offers 4 beds. We have also got another interim property, Richelieu, that offers 4 to 5 beds and we are currently going through the process for registration with the J.C.C. (Jersey Care Commission) but once we have Jersey Care Commission approval it is ready for children.

Director, Children's Services:

It has just got a few last minute bits but ready in a few weeks.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Any idea of date when you think it could actually be used?

Director, Children's Services:

I think it is due the first week in October, dependent on registration.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

That is positive.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, we have got the ...

Director, Children's Services:

It is nearly all ready. It has just got its last bits of required changing because of the registration. It is an interim property.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Tower Road?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Georgetown, Bagot Road.

Director, Children's Services:

It is an interim property.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, it used to be a guesthouse.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Oh, I know, yes, thank you. Yes, I know the one.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Richelieu Lodge.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes, opposite the Talana.

The Minister for Children and Families:

That is it, opposite the Talana, yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Could you just explain what you mean by an “interim” property in that way?

Director, Children’s Services:

So the improvement plan, the estate’s Loving Homes plan, is all built on the premise that we want to stop having interim homes and temporary solutions and we want a proper estate. I think we know that that is immensely challenging to deliver on the Island. We have had a plan to create homes for some time, so the Government Plan and the funding that we hopefully will acquire from there - if it gets through its final approval - will all create homes over the next 5 years that will be permanent. But to get there we have not got enough homes now, so we have got 2 homes - this one and another one - that are due to open this year, are on track to open this year, that will be interim to bridge the gap over those 3 years. They will have a 3-year tenancy and then maybe a bit of an extension that bridges the gap to get to our permanent, long-term estate where nothing then changes. Then we have got one last property that was part of previous Government funding that is due to come online probably January, February, spring 2026, that is also a permanent home.

The Minister for Children and Families:

That is (inaudible) is it not?

Director, Children’s Services:

Yes, that has progressed this year and the work is getting through. It will be ready to go live, so we have got 2 interims, possibly a third interim.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We have got the third one, which is Trinity House.

Director, Children’s Services:

Yes. So those interims will last us through, but the one we have just opened in April is permanent and we have got another permanent one coming on in the new year that will be permanent. Then the Government Plan has one supported accommodation property that will have little flats that attach to it that young people will be able to have proper supported care from, and then there is 3 new homes and they will be brought online in the future in 2028, 2029 that will be in the permanent estate.

The Minister for Children and Families:

The interims will have then served their purpose.

Director, Children's Services:

They will stop and they will go.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, so hopefully this will serve the needs.

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, and then we will have proper homes that do not keep getting moved because tenancies end or we do not get planning. We know we will have the permanent homes, and the new estate plan provides more beds for children so they are not one-bedroomed homes, they are 4 bedrooms. They are still family size homes but more sufficiency and we will be able to match better for children and provide more on-Island.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thank you. Great, so I have some questions now on the subject of child poverty. Minister, could you provide further detail on how initiatives such as reduced G.P. (general practitioner) fees, hot school meals, and increased early years funding are being monitored for their impact on child poverty in Jersey?

The Minister for Children and Families:

How they will be monitored is that Statistics Jersey will conduct the living costs and household income survey. However, that will not be until 2027. So at this point the last time that survey was undertaken in 2022 and 2023 ... I think, Andrew, there was a suggestion that that should be earlier, was there not, but in fact the decision was that it will not be repeated until 2027?

Head of Policy:

Correct.

[14:45]

The Minister for Children and Families:

So in the interim the Cost of Living Development Group ... well, officers from Statistics Jersey are using existing information that is held by the Government and looking at how they can use that to monitor the effects of our various attempts to mitigate child poverty. The work is at an early stage so hopefully I can update you at our next quarterly review.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That would be good if the public could see there is progress as well. Given that the Cost of Living Ministerial Group I believe does not currently focus on children's matters, what steps are being taken to ensure that child poverty is adequately represented in cross-Government decision making?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Andrew, can you help on that?

Head of Policy:

I am mindful that some of the projects or initiatives that the Cost of Living Group have progressed have an impact on families and children. For example, subsidising the costs of G.P. visits to a G.P. surgery may not have children on the tin; outside there is a very definite impact. Also some of the improvement in access to social rented housing and affordable housing schemes impacts on families. I think that some of those initiatives will have an impact on children, even though it does not come with the badge of "children and young people" written on it. So I think from an officer perspective it is really important that we can continue across policy areas to make sure that we are joining up and supporting our Ministers where there are crossovers, and we will continue to do that.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, so there are those things that have an impact but perhaps it is not being looked at necessarily from a child welfare perspective. I know, Minister, at the last hearing you indicated a willingness to join the Cost of Living Ministerial Group. Has a formal request been made for you to be on that forum? Has that been done?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I have to say I do not think that we have done that. That is something we need to take away.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So you intend to follow that up?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, we will follow that up.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Minister, this is quite a long question. Recent Scrutiny hearings and public commentary have highlighted growing concerns about child poverty in Jersey, where parents have said they are going without food sometimes and people are relying on foodbanks. In light of this, could you tell us what measures, if any, are being considered or implemented to address the rising cost of living for families? Have the Government planned to monitor and report progress on reducing child poverty

across the Island? I know you have just talked about some of the monitoring, but is there anything to add to that?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

I think one of the things, that is in the budget of course, is the back to school bonus which will pay for children's school uniforms and other equipment. We know that families with children attending school for the first time or going back to school after the summer break have a fairly large cost of getting uniforms and making sure that their children have all the right equipment to go to school. That is obviously firmly in the budget and there is money earmarked for it, and I am sure that Members will support that initiative.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Is there anything else to add to that, do you think?

Head of Policy:

I think some of the work that colleagues in Social Security are progressing, particularly around some of the Connect Me grants, they are a small amount of grants. There has been a good take-up of them and they represent I think quite an innovative approach, acknowledging Government is not the answer to everything, that Government have a responsibility in this space, but there are also opportunities for small-scale charitable sector to be supported, to reach those parts of our vulnerable families and children that sometimes the Government do not always get to.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I have said it before, as a Constable I am more than aware of this and I think my fellow Constable here is the same, that families do approach us particularly with growing children and they have been to food banks but that simply is not sufficient. We have funds available to help them but of course that is not really how it needs to be addressed. There needs to be more a Government-wide access to funds. We are very open to helping and happy to be able to but the fact that people come to us in almost desperation is a pointer to where we are.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Would you say, Minister, you would be prepared to initiate that sort of conversation within your Council of Ministers about initiatives?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think that is something that we can take away, yes. The fact that we are doing it anyway just proves that it is a bigger problem because it is all the families you do not know about.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Pride is an element, Minister.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes. Likewise - I hope they do not mind me mentioning - but we will be commencing a food bank in our parish as well because there are those people who cannot necessarily get to the food banks in St. Helier and again we can see the need for that, we can see the people who need that help.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you.

The Connétable of Grouville:

That is me, thank you very much. Play facilities, Minister, and the Play Strategy. Can you provide an update on the progress of the Play Strategy, aimed at ensuring children and young people have access to both indoor and outdoor play spaces?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

I can indeed. So where we are with the strategy is we are still on target to produce by the end of the year. We have a working draft that we are just going to go back to the stakeholder engagement group with. Once that is finalised there will be a cascade process and of course I am happy that Scrutiny will be part of the first people to get the strategy. But there is a couple of things that I am sure you are going to ask about and one of them is accessibility of play spaces. As well as the strategy, what we have done is a separate strand of work to produce a digimap, which will map out all the facilities throughout the Island and rate them on how accessible they are, and hopefully give people what the parking provision is and all that sort of stuff. So we are aware that some are already up to scratch, some are not very accessible and will probably never be accessible, as per the one in your parish, Connétable, but that is because of the location. It does not make it impossible; it makes it more difficult perhaps to make it more accessible. So that is another big strand of the work that we are looking at doing, but of course we do not want to just produce a strategy and that be the end of it. After the strategy is produced, there will be a working group that will continue to monitor its progress, continue to make recommendations and push through the main strands that we would like to see that strategy achieve.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Okay, and my next question strangely enough is about the strategy and how it will ensure neurodivergent children and children with disabilities have an equitable chance and exclusive access to play spaces. That I think you have already answered.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

I think what we can do is we can retrofit some of that to make play spaces more accessible, but what we can do with anything that is being created new, that has to be front and centre of our thinking, which it has not always been in the past because they popped up sometimes in a different age where people were not so alive to everyone's needs.

The Connétable of Grouville:

My next question is about feedback from families, carers and advocacy groups being gathered and used to inform improvements in accessibility and inclusion. Is that part of your strategy?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

It absolutely is. The stakeholder group that we have been working with ranges from charities to obviously interested parties to very active individuals who have got really strong views and opinions on what we should have on the Island. It is really good to have those people pushing at the boundaries to make sure that we get something right for Jersey.

The Connétable of Grouville:

It is also interesting to hear that you are going to produce a map of Jersey and it is accessible to every parish, and that was the basis of my next question. What steps have been taken to address gaps in the provision of play spaces, particularly in areas currently under served?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, so I think what the strategy will start to do is start to talk to people as one unit, get the parishes working together a bit more with Government. When there are opportunities, when there is a space that can be developed, that can be done on a collaborative basis, and just make more opportunities for play, which does not always have to be about apparatus. Creating a play space can be a really simple thing. In different cities they create them on streets. It does not have to be about swings and roundabouts; it is about giving young people the opportunity to play, engage in play and teaching parents how to teach their children how to play.

The Connétable of Grouville:

How does the department intend to meet the needs identified in the recent play study in the interim without a co-ordinated strategy? What alternative mechanisms are being considered to ensure equitable provision across all the parishes?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, so again that is at the heart of the strategy. We have looked at other jurisdictions, what works well, what we can take from them and make it work in Jersey. I think it is really important that we

do get the parishes working together with Government to create something better than what we have currently got. There are pockets of excellence around the Island, let us not undersell ourselves. There have been some really good play spaces created in St. Helier recently and there are more to come, but we need to give more opportunities for children around the Island.

The Connétable of Grouville:

You have told the panel in the past that there was not sufficient funding to fund any particular elements of the Play Strategy. If there have been any proposed in the 2026 budget allocation is that going to be forthcoming?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

The strategy is the vision. Once we have got the vision in place then we need to start looking at how we are going to fund it and how we can get people working together better. So to be fair, that will be likely to be a bid in the forthcoming budget, not the one that we are currently working in.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Not in 2026, so more likely to be further in the future?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

A bit further ahead, yes.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Well, thank you for your honesty. Thank you.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Minister, this set of questions is with reference to C.A.M.H.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service). The 2024 inspection report of Jersey C.A.M.H.S., which was produced by Jersey Care Commission, highlighted issues with the working relationship between C.A.M.H.S. and the paediatric ward. Would you be in a position to tell us if those issues in terms of communication have been dealt with and what stage are you at now?

The Minister for Children and Families:

So I think we are confident that staff between the departments are working together, and of course key to both of them is care for young people who are admitted for mental health support. There is an action plan in place between C.A.M.H.S. and H.C.J. (Health and Care Jersey) that has identified a number of joint initiatives to improve working practices. That was identified, as you say, in the 2024 J.C.C. inspection. This has been overseen by the Children's Governance Oversight Group. This has included working protocols, a C.A.M.H.S. inpatient protocol, a standard operating

procedure, additional training and improved communication, including joint work between the lead nurses of both departments. So, yes, there has been progress, we have put things in place to improve that relationship and there are positive indications from that.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Okay, that is good. We will follow that I am sure, thank you. Can you please outline the role of Children's Services and C.A.M.H.S. in the partnership board, and whether they will have a decision-making vote?

[15:00]

The Minister for Children and Families:

P.52 has been lodged and I believe Children's Services are included, but that is on an advisory or consultee basis and they do not have a vote.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Can I just clarify for anybody listening in, Minister; could you describe what P.52 entails?

The Minister for Children and Families:

P.52 is the formation of the Health and Care Partnership Board.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Would you be able to update the panel on the current status of the implementation of A.R.F.I.D. I can say that A.R.F.I.D. stands for avoidant restrictive food intake disorder.

The Minister for Children and Families:

You have stolen my words; I was going to explain that. I was going to do that myself. The C.A.M.H.S. eating disorder team have completed work on understanding what an A.R.F.I.D. pathway would look like, based on models implemented elsewhere and discussions with the clinical background staff and treatment models. This is including therapeutic models as well. A robust pathway will require a tiered level of response, including departments outside of C.A.M.H.S., e.g. school nurses, multiagency input including paediatrics. Additional training and likely additional financial resources are required. C.A.M.H.S. management are working with the Director of Adult Mental Health to look at the potential for an all age eating disorder pathway utilising key clinical skills and resources locally. A.R.F.I.D. is also on the agenda for this but there will be challenges extending

service scope given resource implications. So, as usual, we have to have the resources in order to implement a pathway.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Of course. Specifically in terms of staff training, how are you finding it?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Unfortunately Darren is not with us. I do not know if you are able to help?

Director, Children's Services:

There has been quite a lot of work. I think Darren has had quite a lot of connection with some external ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

With some local experts as well?

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, expertise. I think he has had quite a lot of interface with that in terms of trying to look at I suppose strengthening the understanding in department. I think it will be a much wider thing. Obviously to create a pathway means you have got to create the service. That is the work that they are doing with Adult Mental Health to create that more seamless service across the whole system. But it would need funding and I guess training would need funding in a broader way along with that as a piece of work. But certainly he has been very engaged with I think some of the local expertise there is, and some of the broader expertise, in trying to understand it and make sure that certainly his service have that level of knowledge.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

My next question refers to how have the challenges been addressed around Government. How has the Government addressed the challenges around diagnosis and treatment of the provision of A.R.F.I.D.? I know you have spoken already about the budget, but anything else?

Director, Children's Services:

So I think that work with Adult Mental Health, obviously creating that understanding across the system and trying to look at that all-age pathway I think is probably where the work has been in place, and understanding and bringing that understanding into the service itself is the critical work. Then I think from there you can start to develop the pathway but then it would obviously need resourcing. It will need a whole system change really and a whole system piece of work.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Thank you.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

In response to a written question, Minister, you told us that a review of short break provision for children with complex needs was currently underway, with an expectation of completion and publication in 2026. Can you just give us an update on that work please?

Director, Children's Services:

In terms of the review we have done some work obviously that was done previously that we have already collated. We have got the review of our current residential short breaks provisions underway, so that has commenced and is progressing. Then we have also appointed somebody to bring that all together, to run a project team that is due to start imminently, and that will bring the whole of that offer really into spec so that we understand what is out there, what is in our short breaks offer in our Youth Service that obviously provides for a range of different children through Inclusion, and a wider offer as well. Then also what we have got allocated out for our commissioned arrangements, we need to review all of that. So that work is underway. It should be on target for us to land where we think we need to be, and I guess part of that is about have we got it all configured how we need to have it. Are we doing what we need to do in our residential short breaks that then frees up our offer our commissioned arrangements and other arrangements on our Island? I think that will help us to understand that as a whole.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Whereabouts are you aiming for in 2026?

Director, Children's Services:

We are just waiting for our project person to come in to scope properly; they are bringing together all the strands. So I think if we get to our next Scrutiny we could be clearer about the timeline for a conclusion, but we would not be planning on it taking all of 2026 or anything like that. We would want to bring it together, but until that project person is in to bring together the various timelines of what we have got ... things like our residential short breaks understanding and offer will be sooner, it is just bringing the whole picture. It will be quite complex because there is quite a lot of commissioned and different arrangements across the Island. Also we need to tally that up with the work that is already done around need and our understanding of need and where the gaps are really. There has been quite a lot of work previously with getting feedback and some of that sort of work, so we just need to bring it into one.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

The panel visited Oakwell a couple of weeks ago, which was a lovely visit for us, a lovely facility. Obviously your review is focusing on children's residential break service. One of the things that we were interested to learn was how the transition into adulthood is working, because there is a bit of a hard cut-off at 18. I just wondered if you could tell us please how families are being supported through that transition, how they are explained, what is going to happen and where those children are going to go once they are adults?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

I think we recognise the value charities play in this space, particularly when it is post-18, so New Horizons and Les Amis and Autism Jersey and Headway. So part of that transition into adult services is also to signpost as far as possible where it is appropriate to the charity or support that people can get.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I think the specific areas around that were the residential because we know there are very few commissioned services that will provide people with physical disabilities and complex needs, and I think whereas it is providing a lifeline service for families in terms of respite, once those children get to 18 there is nowhere for them to go. So I think what we are getting at is how early those transition arrangements are going to be made and how those needs are identified and transferred into adult services.

Director, Children's Services:

I would say that we have work to do to make transitions work how you would want them to work, in a really consistent way. I think we have identified there is some difference between what we provide as a child's package and what then you can access as an adult. We have been doing some work with adult services around that but also some of our commissioned providers so that we can start to try to come away from that you have got one offer as a child and then if you get into adults then adults will not pay that same level of package for care. So I think there is more work for us to do there. In terms of practice, I think we have got a lot of work to do in being more creative in our care packages and our support that we provide for families. How we do that in the home or in other arrangements, we have started to get better at that but more work to join up ... there is disability strategy work happening at the moment and I think that will help to bring that together. We have had some recent discussions about the whole of that transition arrangement and how to strengthen that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Have you got a dedicated transition team?

Director, Children's Services:

We do not, but then if you think that our complex needs team is only small, it is quite tiny. We have not got a large volume of children's cases, so we have only got possibly 6 workers in that team, so having a transition team would really be tiny and then you would not probably get the sustainability. I think the work that we are doing is knowing that we need to join up the adults, the children, the transition pathway, and we have got some work to do on that that we have recognised and there is some thinking about bringing that together in the coming months.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

How many children have you got on the waiting list for a residential short break service?

Director, Children's Services:

So that is the work we are doing now. I would need to check this but I do not think we have got any families that are waiting for residential short breaks, but we have got families that want short breaks and an offer. I think what we want to understand is what we have got in those 2 short breaks units and are we making the best use of that - because a residential short break does not only need to be overnight - and how can we make better use of the offer that home can do. You have been to it, it has got really specialist provision in there, specialist staffing. We could perhaps strengthen that offer by doing more in a slightly different way, some of it, and how we can make that better.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes, Oakwell is very expensive to run.

Director, Children's Services:

It is.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

It is costing nearly £1 million and you have really got 14 to 18 children in there, not used during the day ...

Director, Children's Services:

Exactly, and that is the work we are doing, about how do we ... this would be my view, and what that group have been tasked to look at is how do we extend that offer and make much better value for money and in a wider way that more families can access it.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes, the flexibility around ... at the moment it is very fixed: "You will have Tuesday night" et cetera, and how we can flex that.

Director, Children's Services:

I think that has been raised to us quite recently and that is part of the things we have agreed that we do need to look at. Part of that needs to be about how we can be flexible in our offer, what does the offer need to look like, but also we have got some children that are accessing our short breaks offer through the Youth Service that have got really complex needs that perhaps you maybe could make better use for those provisions we have got, and then that would free up more space to then do more of a short breaks offer. Some of the challenge is probably we do not well enough know need and we do not well enough know our offer. When we bring all of that together then we can make better use of everything we have got and I think we can offer a lot more in a different way. We have to be more flexible with some of it and accept it will not be exactly what everyone wants, but we might be able to do a lot more.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you. In terms of accessibility and inclusivity in sports activities, Minister, can you tell us how Government is delivering on its commitment in the Children's Plan to provide more places to play and also free clubs and activities?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, so Jersey Youth Service have an inclusion project and there are lots of sporting activities for young people to get involved with, particularly young people who have got disabilities of one sort or another. This includes activities such as surfing, Healing Waves, Cycling Without Limits, accessible boat trips, Wetwheels. There are lots and lots of great activities that young people can get involved with there, and even yoga and trips up to Jersey Bowl. But the Youth Service of course also provides a short break service which is at the weekends and in the evenings, again to give parents and carers a little bit of space for themselves. Of course Jersey Sport, through Move More, deliver lots of sporting sessions to make sure that people with disabilities are still getting exercise and engaged.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is the short break service that is offered by the Youth Service incorporated into your overall review of the short break provision?

Director, Children's Services:

It is. We will look at all short breaks.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

It will be?

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, we need to look at all the different offers and understand it I think.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay. Obviously we have heard very recently that the Jersey Special Gymnastics Club has closed after 30 years. Is the department supporting those youngsters with their gymnastics, who have very specific needs?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, so we are trying to find activities that are on a par, particularly for people with specific needs, and obviously it is creating a little bit of a challenge, to say the least, but we are still determined to find something that is suitable for people who want to do that sort of activity.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Are you talking to the Jersey Special Gym Club?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, we are.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, lovely. Thank you very much.

The Connétable of Grouville:

I was wondering if I could just say something publicly, that this panel has visited both Eden House and Oakwell and they are both wonderful facilities and providing an excellent service, so I would just like to say that publicly.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Thank you.

[15:15]

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, lovely. I just have a question about secure accommodation for children. Minister, could you outline your current position on the use of physical security measures such as locking doors at night or restricting movement outside the home for looked after children in residential care settings?

The Minister for Children and Families:

It is not that I do not know the information but there is currently an ongoing legislative process and, therefore, at this point in a public setting I am not able to comment. However, I would be happy to give you a private briefing.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. So do you recognise that children going out at night might be at risk of sexual exploitation, especially vulnerable children?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think I have answered this question because I am prepared to do it in a briefing but because of that legislative process and that anything I say might be referred to I, therefore, would be unhappy to answer any questions at this point.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Can you say anything about your opinion on the balance of safeguarding responsibilities against the rights of children?

The Minister for Children and Families:

At this point I am not going to comment.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Donna, did you have that number?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I am very happy for us to arrange a private briefing and I can answer all those questions, but we are in a slightly awkward position at the moment.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

This is because of a legislative process that is ongoing?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay.

Director, Children's Services:

The number of children placed off-Island in the last year ... sorry, do you want this year or the last year? This year?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Both if possible.

Director, Children's Services:

If I give you this year?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes.

Director, Children's Services:

We have got 5. There will be on top of that arrangements like - but these will be tiny numbers - children who go with a parent in an assessment centre with a baby, perhaps with parents, a parent and child, that are not included in that figure because they are not really children placed off-Island. It is a specialist assessment arrangement.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Did you have the figure for last year or not?

Director, Children's Services:

I have got 5 because you said 2025, did you, this year?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

For this year and last year if you had it.

Director, Children's Services:

I have not asked for last year.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

That is okay, so 5 this year?

Director, Children's Services:

Yes, 5 this year.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, all right. Well, I think we have completed all our questions.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Would you like me to give you an update on the youth centre in Ann Street?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I was wondering if I could ask you that actually.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

We see that you are just about to buy it when it is nearly finished.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

I know.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

The panel was fortunate enough to look around the building and see the progress and it is going to be a great place.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, it is great. There is nothing like getting the experience of seeing it before and after so I am really grateful that the panel attended and took it all in. So the Minister for Infrastructure has purchased the site, which is a really big step forward because it brings it completely under our control, and the programme now is that by the end of this year we will start work on Belmont House, so there will be a spade in the ground there, with work on the main building itself starting during 2026 - hopefully the early part of 2026 - with completion being around the middle of 2028. So purchasing the property and the land was the big step forward, now we can get all systems going. You probably remember from when you visited the site that the bit out the back needs to be pile driven and so all that work can start to get mapped in now, which is brilliant.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Removing some of the existing equipment is going to be very challenging.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, it is, but equally there is some really quirky bits of equipment in there, some really nice legacy stuff, so it is going to be a great experience.

The Minister for Children and Families:

The piling has to go in relatively quickly ...

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, it does, because that is how we can ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

... because of the other developments around it. What we do not want to find is that we are cut off from doing the piling.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes, and the machines are sizeable.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, but that is all working out as we were hoping.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

It is, absolutely.

The Connétable of Grouville:

It is a big step forward that it has been purchased.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

It is a great step forward this week particularly.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

All right, that is great. Thank you very much, everyone.

[15:20]