



Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny

Panel

Quarterly Hearing

Witness: The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Thursday, 15th October 2026

Please note this transcript has not yet been reviewed for factual accuracy. It is currently undergoing a verification process, during which Ministers and relevant departments are invited to check and confirm the accuracy of the information presented. A final, fact-checked version will be published once this process is complete. In the meantime, readers should treat this transcript as a draft and be aware that factual accuracy corrections may follow.

Panel:

Deputy V. Li of St. Helier North (Chair)

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

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine of St Mary, St Ouen and St Peter

Connétable D.G. Curtis of St. Saviour

Connétable T. Palmer of St. Lawrence

Witnesses:

Deputy C.D. Curtis of St. Helier Central, The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter, Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Mr. K. Posner, Interim Chief Officer

Mr. J. Williams, Programme Director

Ms. R. Baxter, Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education

Ms. T. Jackson, Policy Officer

[12:31]

Deputy V. Li of St. Helier North (Chair):

Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to this hearing of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel with the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning. Today is 15th October. My name is Victoria Li. I am Deputy for St. Helier North and Chair of this panel. Our remit covers 3 ministerial briefs: Children and Families, Education and Lifelong Learning and Justice and Home Affairs. Several of the panel's questions today appeared on the written answers recently provided by the Minister and Chief Minister and those will cover school facilities, budgets, special education needs and inclusion funding, some about the post-16, plus the department's organisational structure and government work on online harms. We are grateful for those answers and would like to explore them further today. A few housekeeping points: this hearing is being filmed and streamed live and the recording and transcript will be published on the States Assembly website. Could everyone please make sure your phones are switched to silent? Members of the public are very welcome, but I would ask there would be no interruption of the proceedings and no filming or photographing. Minister, can I ask you and your officers to confirm that you have read the witness statement in front of you?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

Deputy V. Li:

Thank you. Now if I may ask my colleagues to introduce themselves in turn and then the Minister, Assistant Minister and her officers as well.

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

My name is Mark Labey. I am the Connétable of Grouville and I am the Vice-Chair of this panel.

Connétable T. Palmer of St. Lawrence:

Constable Tina Palmer of St. Lawrence.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

Hello. I am Chris Rebindaine, Deputy for St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter.

Connétable D.G. Curtis of St. Saviour:

Hello. David Curtis, Connétable of St. Saviour and panel member.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I am Deputy Catherine Curtis. I am the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Deputy Lucy Stephenson. I am the Assistant Minister.

Interim Chief Officer:

Hello, I am Keith Posner. I am the Interim Chief Officer for C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills).

Programme Director:

I am Jonathan Williams. I am the Programme Director for Education Reform.

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

Hello. Rachel Baxter, Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education.

Policy Officer:

Tania Jackson, Policy Officer.

Deputy V. Li:

And our panel officers. Thank you. So this is a very different hearing: 4 months ago you were chairing this panel and I think my Vice-Chair has been finding it very difficult to get used to it.

Connétable M.A. Labey:

Not that difficult.

Deputy V. Li:

I think some of the questions that you are going to hear this afternoon will follow from the work you began from this room, from here, so online harms and also the lifelong learning and some of the recommendations that were being given previously from this panel. So now you have the chance to deliver and we would like to hear about some of the feedback from the team from the department. Shall we begin? Minister, now you have had time to settle into your new role and learn its remit, what are your current top 5 priorities?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, okay. First of all, I will just list the top 5 priorities and then I can go into a bit more detail, if you like. For me, improving the skills offering is a big one, a new further and higher education campus, and these were things that I did write about in Scrutiny; we brought these up at the time in the Lifelong Learning Review. Also improvements to schools, and this is in light of demographics changes, so we think that while we have to make changes, we will make lots of improvements alongside, which will give us an opportunity. The next one would be a focus on S.E.N.D. (Special

Educational Needs and Disabilities) and that is to incorporate the recommendations following the review last year. The fifth one is the extension to Mont à L'Abbé School to be progressed as fast as possible. It did look like that was going to be delayed and this was something I would not accept, yes. So those are probably the overall priorities, which can encompass quite a lot within them. Would you like me to speak on any particular one first or ...

Deputy V. Li:

I think it is good for us to stay kind of high level at this moment, because we will be having specific questions when we go into different topics, and I would appreciate then you can extend that further. I think in general the 5 priorities is what we are hearing right now. Have you come across any challenges since you have become the Minister and what have you seen as the several biggest challenges that you are facing right now in the education system?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think having been Scrutiny Chair of the panel for the last few years was really helpful, because that meant that it was not a surprise to me that there was a lot more work needed on S.E.N.D., for example. There were not any unexpected challenges for me, except for me personally perhaps. I did not quite realise what the workload would be; it is very hard. I do not think there were really challenges I was not expecting.

Deputy V. Li:

Yes. I think earlier when we were doing our pre-hearing, what we discussed is that also how broad this department is and how you go as broad as possible and also you can go as deep as possible. Following on from your priorities, how should this panel measure whether what you are going to do is going to make a difference for the children by 2030? Where would you want to point us to look at?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Of course you have heard the priorities. There are measurable outcomes for all these in place already and of course you will be able to question us in each hearing as well. I do not know if anyone else wants to speak more on the actual measurable outcomes.

Interim Chief Officer:

Absolutely. So certain things, for example, if we take a new further and higher education campus, you would obviously want to see the improvements on the journey to making that happen. That is a really sizeable project, so there will be milestones not only in the construction of a new campus but also in terms of the skills offer that will be delivered from that in the future, so there will be certainly some measurables around that. If we looked at the achieving the recommendations

following the S.E.N.D. review, you would want to see how we are progressing against the measures that we are going to be putting in place. I am sure the Minister may speak about the publication of a medium-term plan for that, which will come out shortly, which has been something that we have saying we will do. There will be measurables against that as well, so there are 2 examples not only for the panel, but I think for the wider public to understand whether the reform agenda that the Minister is driving through is being achieved and is on track. We need to be saying what those outcomes are and then obviously you, as a panel, and others would want to see if we are meeting those.

Deputy V. Li:

So what is your long-term vision for education in Jersey?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Having been in place now since July, first of all there was quite a lot of work and briefings to get through, but we have managed to get out to visit some of the schools already. To be sure of a vision, you need to see what is working already, so it has been very useful to be able to visit these schools and speak to the head teachers, as well as looking at the data and receiving briefings. There is a huge amount of good work going on already, so knowing the position we are at now and seeing where some small improvements can be made is really useful, but also looking at the bigger picture for everything really around the schools. In school improvements, the sort of things I have listed, we have mentioned already the improvements around inclusion, so there is a lot of work going on there. There is the ... I forget what it is called now, but the recommendations to be looked at and worked on before the medium-term plan, so we are looking at ensuring those are strengthened and brought in. We have already seen the improved specialist provision coming in at last with the full educational psychologist team and a principal educational psychologist, so that is going to make a huge difference. We are looking into revised pathways and funding around S.E.N.D., and then of course with the demographic change we can ensure that the provision is aligned with the demand, however that is best done, focusing on high-quality education at the same time. I am very lucky to have come into this position at the same time basically or just before the partnership leads start, because that is, I think, going to be really positive. The partnership leads, there is - just to explain for anyone listening - one head teacher, a very experienced head teacher, who will oversee the town primary schools, another who oversees the west primary schools, another who oversees the east and then one who is overseeing the secondary schools. What happens there is that they will be able to share resources between the schools where that is necessary, they will be able to see where there is best practice and help other schools to bring up their standards in that area. The partnership leads I think will make a huge difference to the quality of education in the next few years. Also another improvement in schools is because we are going to push for Mont à L'Abbé extension, there are some children who will be better served in Mont à L'Abbé than in the mainstream schools, so I

think that will help everyone really, as well as those particular children. We have to continue plans around the new town primary school. We are planning for minor works in schools, including work to address the high temperatures, because that was a problem this summer. There was school time lost because of the heatwave, so we are working on that. Then we have got the reading for pleasure strategy, I think that is very good, and also oracy being rolled out more. I am trying to think of how to define oracy, if anyone is listening and does not know. What is the best definition?

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

Oracy is focusing on helping young people to speak, the way that they explain through their speech, through interactions with each other, how they are learning. It is helping them learn to debate, helping them learn to defend a position, helping them learn to converse with each other in a way that is positive and helps each other grow. So it could be anything from having a really positive interaction in the way that I understand what you are trying to say to me and you understand what I am trying to say, right through to being able to present a fantastic high-level speech which knocks the socks off an audience of 400 people. We have seen some really exciting examples of that in our schools, both at a classroom level, at whole school level and at an Island celebration level.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. I would say on the Children's Day in Howard Davis Park, I watched some children standing up on the stage giving speeches, some of those children who were neurodiverse and yet they found their confidence in being able to speak publicly. I think oracy allows children with some differences as well to be able to excel. Like I said, the reading for pleasure strategy is important.

[12:45]

I think it is going to make a big difference as well. I think there are so many things that we can do over the next few years, and that is around the schools.

Deputy V. Li:

I think it is excellent to hear that literacy has been prioritised and also I hope that there will be more programmes covering numeracy as well, because that is the foundation of our primary school. I am glad to see that Jonathan Williams is here. I do not know about you specifically, but I know about the Education Reform Programme, so I wondered, will you continue the current form or will that be connected with your education commitments under the Common Strategic Policy? What is the current form it is in and how do you see that is going to move forward?

Programme Director:

Shall I take that one, Minister?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

Programme Director:

The Education Reform Programme essentially is a vehicle for delivering the Minister's and the wider Government's ambition, so it needs to change shape and it needs to change scope accordingly. By way of example, the Minister has talked about the new F.E.H.E. (further education and higher education) college and new Mont à L'Abbé build, potentially a new town school as well. Each of those aspects would form part of an Education Reform Programme that will help us respond to challenges in education, whether it is from a demographic pressure or the need to revitalise our estate. But essentially the big-hitting pieces of change the Minister wishes to deliver, whether through C.S.P. (Common Strategy Policy) or through other ambitions, needs to be framed in a disciplined, well-governed change programme. That is what education reform is about.

Deputy V. Li:

How big is your team?

Programme Director:

It is a virtual team more than physical resources in terms of direct leadership, so we have a Projects and Commissioning Team of about a dozen, but we also create teams around the individual projects, not necessarily resources that are embedded in Education. There are 2 or 3 large capital builds and that requires a lot of engagement with our colleagues in Jersey Property Holdings. In that case you would create a virtual team from colleagues across government, based on the needs that you have for the change and the specialties that can be delivered by different of those individuals.

Interim Chief Officer:

Could I just come in there? I think this is really quite important in terms of leadership, the capacity within the organisation, because we have leaders across Education, we have leaders in schools every day leading their school, and we need to draw in the talent when we are making system-wide change because they are the individuals on the front line seeing what is happening, so it is not simply around the number of people sat in the centre. Yes, of course we are driving things because that is our job, but we are bringing in that talent, working with us, so we are getting a consensus for the change across the system too. That is quite a different approach than we have had before.

Deputy V. Li:

Thank you very much. I think one of the things that ... because we are very mindful the budget debate is going to happen, so that is why I asked those questions about the organisation and

particularly around the staff numbers. It is really nice to hear about some of the more tangible deliverables that you wish to deliver. Is there any specific policy or legislation development that the schools or parents and the students would expect during this term?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Legislation, yes. We are going to revising - or we are planning to revise - the 1999 education law. It is something that just needs doing, and we can build into that requirements that we recognise nowadays like inclusion, for example, which is not really ... I do not think it is adequately covered in there at all, is it?

Deputy V. Li:

No.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We will also be aiming to review or redo the daycare law, because we are looking at all the regulations associated with that as well. Some may be unnecessary, but whatever we do, we have to keep in mind the safeguarding and welfare of small children. That is some legislation. There are some minor points of legislation we can improve as well to allow for a little bit more understanding to be given in specific cases around student finance, for example, which we have been working on. That is sort of the legislation piece. For the policies, I think it is what we need to do around the priorities I have described.

Deputy V. Li:

When you chaired this panel, you were very passionate about online harms, and I know that has been quite a journey for your panel to really put your recommendation forward and hold the last Minister to account. You now sit on the Online Safety Policy Ministerial Group, which has been changed under this new Government. I know that you held the first meeting on 7th September. Did you raise your recommendation at that meeting?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. We had a very good meeting. It is still chaired and under the responsibility of the Minister for Children. I am hoping to take on more responsibility at some point for online harms. It was a positive meeting, because all of us sat around the table were in agreement that Jersey is part of something bigger nationally and internationally and that we have to look at how we fit into national and international considerations, rather than thinking about everything from a local viewpoint. I think that we will be able to move forward. We are waiting partly for the legislative gap analysis, which I thought was going to be ready this year. I need to check up on that, so I will check up on the date for that coming out. Also there are some other consultations planned. I should mention for any

parents listening, there is a lot of advice on the DigiSafe website. Now, because this is a matter that is always changing and developing around anything online, it is updated quarterly, as necessary, and can be updated more frequently than that as well, but yes, it needs to be updated quite often. I think that is helpful for parents, but I do think we are going to be able to make progress on online harms.

Deputy V. Li:

I do understand that when you are saying about the legislative gap analysis, I think that is not going to be completed until later next year. It again is because ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

If I come back to you on that, because I think it might ...

Deputy V. Li:

I think that will be very good, and also the consultation that you were talking about. It is very crucial for us to understand about where is the gap and how do people see those gaps. My question is more about what specifically your department is going to be contributing to this work.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

So in Education, for what we do, we already have strict controls around mobile phone use in schools. That has worked very well. There has not been any negative feedback really about that at all. We keep updating anything around this to include new devices like - what are they called - the Meta glasses and so on. Now it is a very different situation from a few years ago, when people would go into school and they would all have their phones out filming the children at concerts and that. Now what parents are advised to do is that they must not film anyone unless there is consent from all parents, so it is quite different. We have just been updating some of that within the last few weeks as well, have we not?

Programme Director:

That is correct, yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. So I think within the school system, we have already done a lot of work. We just have to build on it, as necessary.

Deputy V. Li:

I think further to that, if you have any details that you would be able to share with us, please do. Then let us move on to the screen time. Also your previous panel recommended that the

Government should work with Public Health Jersey to bring evidence-based guidance on the screen time into the government policy and into practical measures in the schools. The last Government only accepted partially. Are you going to commit fully into this? If so, how is the Public Health advice feeding into the work right now?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, I do want to commit fully into this. I do realise we need to wait for the Minister for Children to return to the Island for this - it is under his overall responsibility - but we did raise the matter in the ministerial group meeting about consulting with Public Health again to get some definite recommendations from them to work on. Yes, I would like to do that.

Deputy V. Li:

Do we have a timeline?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think we have to wait really for the Minister for Children to return. This is still underneath his remit.

Deputy V. Li:

Okay, great. We are going to move to the youngest children in the system and the funded childcare pilot for 2 to 3 years old.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Minister, are you in a position to inform the panel how many applications have been made, accepted and rejected to receive the 2 to 3-year funding?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, I have got some figures here. I do not know if I should speak on it or if it would be better for somebody else. Jonathan, do you want to come up with the ...

Programme Director:

Happy to, certainly. We have some of that information. In terms of applications, we have had 507 applications directly which have been received and accepted and processed to a payment value of £2 million. We also are working with the Jersey Child Care Trust for a cohort of parents who are unable to make the payment in advance and then apply to have recompense. They have supported 30 applicants to the tune of just over £100,000. We have also had just shy of 50 applicants come through who have confirmed that their childcare requirements are currently being met by income support, so that group are reassured that they have the necessary funding and they therefore do not get processed as an applicant for 2 to 3s. I do not have the rejection numbers here, but I can

provide that detail. We have it all tabulated, so that is straightforward, but I can say within that is that we continue to have an error challenge around invalid receipts. That is the main thing that causes us concern in trying to get the applications processed quickly and the payments out the door to parents on that, so we try to work on feedback in particular to update and upgrade our web services page to try to provide the best advice to help parents get that application processed straight through.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Have you had feedback provided about the pilot scheme in terms of how it is working?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

About the?

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

The scheme, how it is working: have you had the parents feed back as to their impressions?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is all very positive, what we have had back. There is not ...

Programme Director:

Absolutely, supportive and positive. The issues that we have had are in the minority as opposed to the majority. There were definitely teething problems at the point at which we launched the service. So you had a quick decision at the back end of last year into implementation at the start of this, so some lumps and bumps in that application process, but we were able to iterate quite quickly and improve the process. We have also been given good feedback on the ability to secure support through Jersey Child Care Trust and they have worked very well on our behalf to help that other cohort that we were concerned about at the point of launching. The complaints, such that they have been made, are largely around some of the details around how to provide receipts. Otherwise it has been well received and the groups that represent parents as well have also been feeding back positively, certainly through childminder group and the Jersey Child Care Trust as well.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

But given a lot of those bumps were probably caused by parents having to pay first and claim it back, is there any chance that you would reconsider that process so that they do not become primarily liable?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think the process is working really well. We do think that parents would understand what a receipt is, so if the errors are receipts not being sent in, it is something else. It is probably because parents are busy, that is all, and they will just need a little bit of help to reapply if that is the case. I do not think there are any issues really with this. I know before it came into place I was a little bit sceptical about it, but having seen it in operation, it is working really well. I think the only complaint I can think of directed to me was because we brought in the option of having accredited nannies as well, and I had a couple of emails from people who said: "Why did you not do this before?" I mean, personally, I started it on the day after I got into position, so I could not really do it before. So people would have liked it to have been done sooner. I do not know if you want to speak any more on this. Lucy has just taken up the responsibility for ...

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. It is very new to me, in the last couple of days, so bear with me. I think the other thing that we have not said is just a reminder it is a 2-year pilot project, so there will be a formal assessment process at the end of it to see how it is working when hopefully it is continued, because I think there is a lot of positive feedback from parents and we know that affordability of childcare is the number one priority for families out there. They have told us in numerous surveys and we are very cognisant of that. Yes, there will be some formal assessment that goes on as part of that process, I am sure.

[13:00]

But we are continually receiving feedback and it has been overwhelmingly positive.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

You mentioned the Jersey Child Care Trust. Have they given you specific feedback as to how it is working for them?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We have got that, have we not? I have got a note on it written down, I think. Well, they are very supportive and happy with it, so it is sort of generally all very well received.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We have a very good working relationship with the Jersey Child Care Trust and I think it seems to be working well. I am sure they would tell us when it is not, if it is not.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We also have meetings with the Jersey Early Years Association. We have got one coming up soon as well, and it benefits us a lot to be able to hear from the professionals involved.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

And the Best Start Partnership.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, and the Best Start Partnership and the family daycarers, so we benefit from hearing from these groups too. It seems that this process is going well.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

In the proposed budget, it looks like extra hours are going to be funded for these 2 to 3 year-olds, up from 15 to 20 hours. Before that decision was made, what consultation was taken with the nurseries to establish that they have got the places and the required staff to deliver it?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There had been consultation over previous years and with roundtable meetings. Even while I was in the Scrutiny Panel, while speaking to members of the industry, we heard from them how they would prefer around 20 hours, so there had been plenty of earlier consultation. The proposal for this was first brought forward under the ... what is it called?

Programme Director:

Is it the Cost of Living Group?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The Cost of Living Group, which is not chaired by me, and then we reviewed that. So the consultation process would have been under the Cost of Living Group in any case.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Can I add something? It is also the 20 hours does go back through some of the evidence-based reports that there have been over the years about this age group, so it was not just picked out of nowhere. I think there has been recommendations in the past around 20 hours for 2 to 3 year-olds and there was consultation as part of those pieces of work, so it is an ongoing ...

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

I think the question was less about is it needed, it is more whether it can be delivered, so the question is: is there the capacity? We have seen this week an announcement about one of the places is shutting because it does not have enough staff so, I mean, it begs the question.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It was shutting for numerous reasons, I think. Your question was about the consultation. Hopefully we have answered that properly. Around the capacity, what we see at the moment is new nurseries starting up as well, so it is quite a positive picture overall. There is plenty of choice for parents out there, and although it is very sad about a nursery closing, we have to remember that particular nursery as well is part of a business - and a national business - and they have to make the right decisions for themselves for their business. It is not us who makes that decision, it is up to the business itself. We are not going to interfere with that. We did try to make sure we could assist them in lots of ways and in the end they decided they needed to close, but there are lots of other nurseries who are performing extremely well; the parents are very happy with them.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think evidence has been provided to the department most recently that they are expecting capacity within the system at a number of nurseries. There are nurseries actively advertising on social media currently - I have seen them in recent days - so we do know that there are spaces within the system. There has also been an increasing number of new applications for registered childminders, so recognising that parents and families need choice in their childcare offering as well.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, and that particular Leeward setting which is going to close, the Busy Bees group have informed the parents, I think, that they can offer them places in their other nurseries as well and for the staff too.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

So you are comfortable with the capacity element of being able to provide the service. You mentioned earlier about a daycare review. Is that potentially about the ratio between ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think we have to be really careful about the ratios, because the most important issue in all of this is that the child is safe and well-looked after, but we are looking to see if there are unnecessary regulations that we can improve on, because this is something that has built up over time and I think it is time for us to look into it and improve what is there.

Interim Chief Officer:

The legislation goes back to 2002, so it is right that the Minister wants to focus on this, but as she said, to make sure that the registration requirements work for nurseries, but also work in terms of what is needed to protect children and to deliver the best possible service. It feels like the right time to do that.

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is absolutely not about deregulation though, to be very clear.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, and we have been working on this over the last few months, have we not? Yes.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Slightly evolving, how do you see school readiness in children and early years? Is it being evaluated and improved for children as they arrive at school?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We do not really use the term “school readiness” anymore because it is recognised that every small child should have that opportunity to start school. Whether they are in nappies or whether they are not in nappies or whatever, they need to have the opportunity to start school just like any other child. What we do is welcome those children in and see what we can do best for them and then we have characteristics of effective learning, like playing, active learning, thinking creatively. We measure all these as the child leaves the end of nursery. I have got the figures here, so for 2026 end of nursery, an indication of children’s starting points when starting reception: so 83 per cent are achieving as they should do in communication and language; 82 per cent in personal, social and emotional; 89 per cent physical development; 92 per cent in well-being; 88 per cent in involvement; 87 per cent characteristics of effective learning. So that is what we want to see, is the children during that time they are in their nursery and then they develop and at the end of that time they are ready to go on to reception. I do not know if anyone else wants to speak more.

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

I think you have explained that really well. I think what we are trying to say is that we want our schools to be welcoming places and we do not want any family to arrive and to be presented with the perception that their child is not welcome, that their child is not ready to access learning. Whatever the additional needs of a child, we would expect ourselves to be ready to meet the needs of those children. We are really aware of social and economic developments in the last 5 years. Occasionally people still reference back to COVID and the impact that had on families, but we are definitely seeing a change in the way that families are operating since COVID and we are seeing that in children, but that is not about identifying children as not being ready, it is about saying we need to understand the needs of children and families and meet them effectively and we have got the right measures.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

When you say “change”, change can mean all sorts of things. When you say “change”, what do you mean?

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

Sorry?

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Since COVID, you said you have seen a change.

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

Yes. So we know that ... I do not know that COVID is the cause for all of it, but there has been a little bit of a sort of benchmark of what came before. I suppose because of how people came into school, it changed and we had about 18 months with different entrances and different approaches, but we are seeing children with different strengths in speech, for example. There is quite a lot of research emerging now about the impact of screens in very small people and how that is affecting language development. If you cannot express yourself, it is much harder to feel comfortable in school, so it is about helping. It is making sure that we have got the right systems in place. The early learning journey starts way before school and we have got really good things in place. That is why the quality of nursery education is so terribly important, because if we can get it right with 2 to 3s, if we can get it right with 3s to 4s and make sure that those young people are supported with the opportunities to speak, with the opportunities to develop their physical dexterity, with the opportunity to expand their vocabulary and their understanding of the world, then they will be ready to interact with each other and then they will be ready to learn. But it is a stepping stone, and what we are trying to do is build it through from early years right through to reception and into school.

Deputy V. Li:

I think as a panel we welcome absolutely holistic development for the children, particularly from a young age. I reckon Deputy Rebindaine’s question was about when you say the “change”, do you mean that the children are performing better or performing less before they enter the school, whether they are prepared, whether they are ... what you are talking about, the cognitive development or whether you are talking about their literacy levels. I think that we want to understand about are we seeing positive change or are we seeing more special education needs needed or more guidance needed? Because as I remember that, I think the U.K. (United Kingdom) put specific measurements for nursery to support the children with their potty training. Yes, I agree with you that holistic development is really important, but if you do not have any measures before they enter the school, it is really hard for the schools to understand about what specifically they need to allocate an individual child, for them to understand what they need and what provision they need to put in their nursery setting.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I will just answer briefly and then perhaps you can come in. Of course there are the measures which I have already outlined, so when those children finish nursery, before they start school reception, I outlined those measures. I think the changes that were most noticed - I know when we have spoken to head teachers - was around the personal, social and emotional development, around communication and language. These are probably the most important things for little children and clearly being kept indoors a lot during lockdowns and then also perhaps being a lot more onscreen than other children would have done in the past, those things are not helpful to communication and emotional development and things like that. I would say, Rachel, that that is probably the main things, is it not? I do not know if you need to add anything.

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

Within the early years system, we have got an Early Years Inclusion Team, including a number of special educational needs trained staff. We have supported the training of S.E.N.C.O.s (special educational needs co-ordinators) in nurseries across the Island, so it is not just in school settings that children and families have access to special educational needs support, it is also across private settings. I think that has been a really powerful development in the last few years.

Deputy V. Li:

I think it is good to note that this is one of the tangible deliverables from what we were discussing about the screen time, that you need to work with Public Health. I hope that we will see more collaboration from there. Shall we move into schools?

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

We will, yes, primary and secondary funding and attainment. Minister, what thoughts have you given to enforcing a social media ban and a policy for students in educational settings?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Children in educational settings will not be using social media anyway, so that is not occurring, yes. The social media ban, like it has been proposed in the U.K., is something that the online harms ministerial group is looking at.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

How soon?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I cannot speak for them all, and it is the Minister for Children leading it, so I cannot really give more info on that at the moment.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Thank you, Minister. Minister, you referred to DigiSafe earlier and obviously we were just wondering if there had been any feedback on that from relevant parties, teachers, parents and families. I appreciate you made one comment that perhaps it could be updated more regularly, but has there been any other feedback, either negative or positive?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I know that there has been a lot of ... the N.S.P.C.C. (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children), for example, I think have helped to work on what is on DigiSafe, so there has been a lot of involvement with experts and stakeholders to produce what is on DigiSafe. I have not heard of any particular feedback since then because it is fairly new and, like I say, it is being updated regularly. I have not heard of any negative feedback at all. I think we still need to get it more public, so that more people know about it, because a lot of helpful resources on there.

[13:15]

So yes, if any parents are listening, look up DigiSafe.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Thank you, Minister. The previous Minister told this panel that a business case for school digital infrastructure would be brought forward for the next budget. Is it funded in the Proposed Budget 2027-2030?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I mean, we were discussing this and the next budget coming up is the 3-year budget, where I think there will be more growth bids in there because we have not been able to do that this time. I do not know if anyone wants to ...

Interim Chief Officer:

Yes, I can come in. So not for 2027 specifically. However, within 2027, as a department we are looking at the areas that we do need to obviously support and fund to make sure that the systems in schools on the network run appropriately, but we are in conversations with Treasury about what that will look for future years, but there is a recognition that we do need to invest in the infrastructure, but also in devices. What is beneficial for us I think at this time is the conversations you have been having around online harms. Alongside online harms is the digital offer in schools as well, and it is

getting the appropriateness between the 2, but obviously it has got to be a safe network and so on. It is a big focus for us in the department and a lot of work to do in 2027. That is where we will be developing any future bids if that is the way that we go, but certainly we do need to invest from within departments.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Was the business case study for that completed?

Interim Chief Officer:

So the business case would be that ...

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Would be that.

Interim Chief Officer:

... piece of work, yes.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Okay. So at the moment, no?

Interim Chief Officer:

Not for 2027 specifically, but working towards within the 3-year budget potentially, yes, absolutely.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I do think there is quite a lot of support in Council of Ministers for us to invest in this. It is something quite positive.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Thank you, Minister. Minister, at the end of the most recent financial year, how many primary schools, secondary schools, special schools were in deficit and by how much?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Do you want to ...

Interim Chief Officer:

I think we would probably have to come back and answer specifically.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Yes, I appreciate that.

Interim Chief Officer:

So where are we now? October. Yes, we can provide you that at the end of quarter 3.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Okay, thank you. With that in mind, have the finance boards that were established in 2025 reduced school deficits and what measurable outcomes have they achieved?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Can you just repeat that, have they ...

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Apologies. The finance boards established in 2025 that were set up to look at school deficits, have they had any measurable outcomes or achieved anything since 2025?

Interim Chief Officer:

Yes, they have reduced overspending positions within schools. It has meant that we have been able to certainly recognise where the pressures are more clearly. They do sit within our special schools at the moment but that is where the highest inclusion need is. That is not unsurprising. It has enabled us to plan and feed into the Educational Reform Programme which Jonathan spoke about earlier. I think there has been lots of benefits from tightening our governance around finances, reducing the overspending position, but also seeing where the pressure points are, because there does continue to be pressure points, absolutely, within the system. It is about ensuring that we make sure we invest where we need to in the right places.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, and in fact there is a lot of focus on this, is there not? We had a meeting yesterday around the deficit position with the special schools, bearing in mind that there has been a huge increase in children and young people with very high dependency needs, so it is quite a big change even from 10 years ago, so of course for us to focus on it, to progress the extension of Mont à L'Abbé School I think will help with that situation as well.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Thank you, Minister. Do we know how many schools have entered deficit recovery plans since the last hearing?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We will have to come back on that, I think.

Interim Chief Officer:

Yes, we do, but I do not want to give you the wrong answer now, sorry.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

I suppose the panel's question would be what are the current top 3 causes for school deficits and overspends?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The main issues I talked about were the very high dependency needs, or perhaps dependency needs is not the best ...

Assistant Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Additional needs, yes.

Interim Chief Officer:

Additional needs in schools.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, additional needs.

Interim Chief Officer:

So inclusion within schools and how schools need to adapt to make sure that the curriculum is accessible to all students and students are kept safe and their needs are met. That is changing. We are in a very dynamic landscape there. You spoke about obviously within early years, but that is being translated at every single phase within education. The other main pressure alongside that is our non-staff pay. You would have seen every household that we have in Jersey and beyond in terms of cost of living and the cost of energy and so on and so on, and that impacts on schools as much as it does the home as well, so there is pressure there.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

With that in mind, Minister, have we had any progress of schools successfully sharing either staff costs or resources here?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think this is something that the partnership leads are going to bring about. They only started properly in September, so it is very early days for them, but we have met - I mean, obviously the

team has met with them, I have met with them as well - and we have had some really good discussions. They are very good people and so they are going to do a good job, so that will be a lot more sharing of resources between the schools, sharing of expertise. They have only just got started.

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

There have been some examples previously, so it is a case of building on good practice. It is finding where subjects can be shared, so there has been examples of sharing business phase teachers across organisations on the Island, for example, but it is about whether the member of staff can move efficiently. We have also had sharing of languages teachers. That is already in place. We have peripatetic language teachers and some music and some sports teachers who work across more than one setting, so they are employed by 3 schools or 4 schools doing one day or 2 days a week, so the precedent was set. I think the development with the partnership leads will be to do that in a more holistic way and for a bigger number of schools to be able to consider that. Rather than 2 or 3 schools sharing something, considering the efficacy of 7 or 8 organisations getting together and saying: "What can we share? What can we learn and what challenges can we face together?"

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Thank you, Minister. Given that every government secondary school was reported to be in deficit earlier this year, what confidence does the Minister have that the current funding formula has allocated resources appropriately?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, we are looking completely around the special educational needs and disabilities and how that is done, where there is a better way perhaps to assist children and young people who are in this position. There will not be any decrease in the amount of funding available in that area but we will be able to do it in a better way, so that is perhaps the main area where we can work on, I think, to start with.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Funding for school improvements falls from £5.8 million in 2024 to £2 million in 2027 and to nothing in 2029 to 2030. All funding for accessibility work ends entirely after 2026. Do you accept that this proposed budget represents a real-term cut to school learning environments and how do you reconcile that with rising demand for special education needs and provisions?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Okay, so we have got the one-year budget at the moment. Did you want to speak ...

Interim Chief Officer:

I can come in on that. I think you are referring the capital spend, yes. That is a challenge. I think the Minister recognises that and that is for discussions for the next 3-year term to look at that, because that funding is used for improvements within schools, particularly around areas like you mentioned in terms of special educational needs, how we have to adapt the buildings to accommodate different groups of students, so these will be live discussions I am sure the Minister will be having with her colleagues about what future budgets look like there.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, and this has been discussed in Council of Minister meetings as well, so I am confident that we will be okay with that.

The Connétable of St. Saviour:

Thank you, Minister. I will hand back to the Chair.

Deputy V. Li:

We talked a lot about buildings and budgets and we did not talk about the attainment. We understand between 2021 and 2025 the attainment gap between pupils eligible for Jersey Premium funding and their peers narrowed at the end of the primary school from 20.9 per cent to 15.8 per cent, but at G.C.S.E. (General Certificate of Secondary Education) it has remained static at 27.4 per cent. Why is the progress made in primary schools not carrying through to the secondary and what will you do differently to close that gap by 2030?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

When we saw that there was not the progress in that secondary school area, whereas it was working in primary, I wanted to look into this and find out more. We have had meetings about it, we have work being done on it and presented to us. We have also looked at individual secondary schools and their plans for their spending of the premium funding and seeing if there needs to be more consistency, so we are working on this at the moment, but there is some differing ways to do this: rather than spending focused on a particular child, to spend more on the whole class to bring up the standard of the class, because if your class includes around 20 per cent of children with S.E.N.D., then it can be better to focus on the class overall, in some ways. This is the sort of thing we are looking at to see what is the best approach. So we are working on it, because clearly that did not sound good when we saw that figure. I do not know if anyone wants to add any more.

Interim Chief Officer:

Rachel may want to come in.

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

I think a key focus for us in Education is equity, so to make sure that young people, whatever barriers to learning they may be facing, are supported to achieve the best that they can. Jersey Premium is one measure which seeks to address financial disadvantage. S.E.N.D. is another barrier to learning for some young people, depending on their educational need. It may be that having a multilingual background might be a huge benefit for some young people, but in some young people it can prove a barrier, particularly if they arrive later to our system and have to learn English while they are also accessing a general curriculum. So we have moved from a single focus to Jersey Premium. We hold schools to account for their spend of pupil premium, and if you want to see how schools are spending it, every school publishes an annual review of their plan and of the impact of their spending. What you will see from the impact of that is the focus has moved to holistic development, because we know that young people who are well, who are balanced, who are supported are more likely to achieve. So it is not just focused on academic interventions, it is much more focused on helping the young person to develop in the round, but also looking at whether that young person has more than one barrier. It is quite unusual for a pupil with pupil premium that that might be the only barrier to their learning. Some young people will have more than one barrier to learning, so we would also look at whether a S.E.N.D. need was the bigger need or whether the 2 things together is something that we should be considering. Schools have got really skilled at supporting individual young people with programmes that work for maximum impact, so it could be that you spend some of pupil premium money on bringing in an additional member of staff, which means that for some lessons you can offer smaller groups and targeted intervention to support some children who might have a particular area of need, because economic disadvantage will not affect everybody the same way. So we try to avoid looking at young people as a big homogenous group, but to look at them as individuals, but that additional targeted funding allows schools, in a school that has got maybe 40 per cent of its pupil body having significant economic disadvantage compared to maybe some schools having maybe 11 per cent, then they can say to children and families: "This is how we are supporting you and this is the extra and this is the difference" which will address that.

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

No, of course. When I was answering, I was thinking about the overlapping areas of S.E.N.D., longitudinal learners and Jersey Premium, so of course it is such a broad field. Some of those children, like you said, will be in several of those groups. Some will only be just Jersey Premium and not in the other groups, but we have been looking at the individual school plans and seeing what is best, what is working best, so we are evaluating that at the moment.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, we are.

[13:30]

Deputy V. Li:

So am I taking it that the head teacher has autonomy to decide whether you wish to allocate that funding from Jersey Premium to whatever area that they think needs to be filling the gap?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

They put forward a plan and that comes to the department, does it not?

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

They make an annual plan based on best practice, so there is lots of similarities between the things that the schools are doing, because they are evidence-informed, so the Education Endowment Fund in England produces data, looking at the best way of addressing different kinds of disadvantage and barriers to learning. The E.E.F. (Education Endowment Fund) has a really detailed programme on how to support using what in England is called the Pupil Premium. So the advice that our schools are following is usually that advocated by the E.E.F. You can see that they are focusing in particular on oracy, in particular on literacy, in particular on support for reading, in particular for support on wider well-being and confidence.

Deputy V. Li:

So may I take it that your department is going to put some inspection under the new change?

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

We review every year. We employ a sort of annual review system to the reports, but also as part of the Jersey Schools Review this will be a key part of analysis. So if you read any school review, it will always comment on how young people who are eligible for Jersey Premium are performing in the school. It will also report on how young people with a S.E.N.D. profile are. It will also make analysis of different groups, crossover groups, so you have got a deep dive, I suppose you could say, a detailed review from a Jersey Schools Review, which is a 3-day visit from specialists. Then you have got annual self-review by the head teachers, and then we have a board who meet, the Jersey Premium board, and schools report to that and share best practice, and bring ideas to ... and bring proposals for central ideas as well.

Deputy V. Li:

One of the things is that the attendance has been treated as an equally important outcome measure for Jersey Premium students. Do you know the current rate of persistent absence among the pupils eligible for the funding compared with their peers?

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

I do not have that figure in my head.

Programme Director:

We would have it at school level.

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

We would have to come back to you, I think, on that one.

Deputy V. Li:

Do you keep reviewing that as well?

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

Yes, that is all recorded. That is all recorded, absolutely.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you, Chair. Staying on the theme of S.E.N. inclusion funding and outcomes, if I may, the additional inclusion funding introduced in 2023, which was at that time £6.1 million, was used for a wider remit than inclusion, including £1 million for recruitment, and its allocation has not been tracked since. The previous Minister acknowledged that the 2021 review identified a need of around £18 million. How can the panel and parents know whether this money is reaching the children with special educational needs?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, we certainly could have done with more than that £6 million. Clearly a lot of our funding is going into S.E.N.D. Regarding the previous year's assessment of how that was spent, have we got any thought on that?

Programme Director:

We do track and understand therefore the allocation of that money. We can report on, for example, what level of funding went to support children with records of needs or what went to additional resource provisions. If the panel are interested we can provide that breakdown, and that is also traceable back to that original £6 million allocation. I think, as colleagues have already expressed - and the Minister in particular - there is a challenge in the context of the level of funding for our specialist provisions, and that is something that sits within the programme of work that Rachel is leading. That will determine the extent to which the funding formulas for the specialist schools are adequate in terms of their total value or that are allocated to different underlying schools.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you. What proportion of the £25.7 million in inclusion staffing is spent on staff who work directly with children with special educational needs?

Programme Director:

I think again it is the kind of information we can find for you, but we do not have the detail now. My suggestion would be that we can take a look, for example, at learning assistance. There are certain members of our workforce who are more likely than not to be working directly with children with additional need, so if the panel accepts some assumptions that we can state, we can provide some information as to what level of funding is allocated through different workforce types that can be assumed therefore to be directly supporting children and young people.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you. Has the review of S.E.N. funding allocation been completed yet, and if so, what were its conclusions?

Programme Director:

That is one of the deliverables of the inclusion programme that is underway at the moment. The current conversation is about the extent to which we can make changes in the financial year 2027, and in fact we have got a discussion with the leadership team on that next week. But we want to make sure that we are changing not just the funding allocation, but then the necessary underlying processes at the same time so they are in lockstep. That is part of our decision, what is safe to change and helpful for schools now just in terms of financial and budgetary changes, and what needs to be changed at the same time as processes. One example, which is not a decision, but that has been discussed, is that when the £6.1 million was invested in proportion for record of need, that was also adjusted termly with the intention at that time - as was best practice elsewhere in the U.K. - that the child might move between terms and that the money should move to follow the child. But the assumption that has failed us in this context that we are revisiting is that the resources, the teams, can move at the same pace. It has not proved to be so easy, so we are now thinking about the same level of funding but with a lower frequency of change, and that means that schools can plan for their resources, can build their capacity on a more stable basis, which would then lead to better support and outcomes. For example, variability of changing of funding is one of the things that we are looking at for next year.

The Connétable of Grouville:

We have a few more questions about that further down.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I just wanted to say that we are doing a lot of work on this, and we need to do work on this. We are responding to the S.E.N.D. review as well. But it is also, on a more practical level, to go to the schools and look around and see what they are doing and speak to the head teachers and the other staff. Just last week I visited 2 secondary schools and went to look at the additional resource provisions they have there. In one of the schools they have a couple of separate ones and they are very nice places to be in. One of them was more for children who have difficulty in learning at the same level as some other children and it is a nice place for them to go to. Another one was for children who might need a bit of time out from the others and to have a bit of a quiet space and things like that and some extra help. It is really important as well that we keep that loop between us and the schools, because they are often doing something better themselves, just under their own steam, so we keep doing that too. I just wanted to add that in.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you, Minister. One of the written questions - you said it was question 119 - that the department does not collect data on how early identification affects outcomes compared with later intervention, will you start collecting that data from here?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I am just trying to think of how we can go ahead with that.

Interim Chief Officer:

Can you get underneath a bit more of what you ...

The Connétable of Grouville:

It is just the early identification of need in comparison to later intervention, and would you start collecting data on how they compare?

Interim Chief Officer:

We would need to take that away and think of how we could do that.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. Obviously we want to do the best for all of the children, so the earliest identification of need we can get is what is important.

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

I think the difficulty with that - we do try and there are processes in place - but one of the difficulties is that young people's milestones with externally ratified assessments are quite few and far between.

You enter primary school when you are 4 or 5, and we acknowledged when we got that additional S.E.N.D. funding it was proportionally weighted towards primary school intervention, and that was because we know from research that early intervention will make the difference, but that was 5 years ago, so young people who were 4 are now 9. They will not take an externally ratified exam, if you are going to judge performance in that way, until they are 11 and they will not take G.C.S.E.s for another 5 years after that. So we will be tracking, but even with pupil premium - Jersey Premium money - started in England a reasonable time before ours did. Our young people, the very first young people who got Jersey Premium investment when they were little, are now only in year 9. So again, to track the impact of that spending in a measurable way that fits a public-facing view of exam results is quite tricky, because it is such a long time between investment and outcome. What we can do qualitatively is assess the number of other supports that young people need and if we get it right in early years then ... we have seen some quite exciting things with early years intervention in the last couple of years, where we put intensive support in nursery and reception classes, and then the number of young people in reception and year 1 who then needed a record of need was less. By giving those young people early intervention and helping their families and helping them, by the time they joined year 1 they were able to access learning, they had had that intervention. Now, it is quite difficult to measure a deficit, so they did not need a record of need, but I can track that 2 years previously with that level of need, you might have had 15 records of need in a school; we might only get 8 in another year. That qualitative and quantitative analysis is how we would track it. Schools would have data on their own cohorts. They know those young people and those families really well and they will be modifying their interventions, they will be modifying where they put their investment in the light of what works. They will try a different type of early intervention and if it is very successful they will keep going with it. One of the things that will begin to change, I hope, is we will have more sharing of those best practices. Moving from an annual Jersey Premium discussion at the board about what worked for early years, we might now be moving within a partnership to have a conversation at the end of every autumn term: "How did your reception transition arrive; what worked; what did not; and what can we do differently?" But I suppose when we talk about intervention, that is really what education is: very small tweaks, very small changes, the way that we might use oracy, the way that we might use literacy, the way that we might ask a teaching assistant to be deployed. It is that kind of small detail that will make the difference.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you. The previous Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning suggested that the current funding model was not fit for purpose. What are your views?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, I wonder what he was talking about exactly. Honestly, it is hard to respond to something that a previous Minister said without the details. The current funding model, every year it is assessed. We published that in January this year, I think, the update to the ...

Programme Director:

I think by the end of quarter 1 certainly the school funding formula is published, yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

So it is there online, it is public to look at. Whatever the comments that were made were, if you do look at the document online, you will see that there were very small changes made and not really anything much at all.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Nothing major?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

No. We have already talked about the funding around S.E.N.D. and we are looking to make changes there anyway as we make improvements, so that is the main area I think we are looking to change.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you. What, if any, additional investment has been made in inclusion support since the beginning of this year and will you be requesting further funding in the government budget?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We are going to be focusing ... we have just produced a budget. We have already started working on the next one. We are doing that work now.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Is there an identifiable S.E.N. demand and funding gap that you perceive?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We know about the schools, Mont à L'Abbé and what was La Passerelle - I know they changed their name - but we know about their deficits, so that is where we are focusing.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Sure. What is the average time between a pupil's needs being identified and funding being received at the school?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I am sure that can be better answered by one of the officers, but I would just say first of all that the staff in the schools will be responding to that child's needs before they are sending official assessments. They will recognise what the child needs and they will be doing their best to respond to them. As for the funding ...

[13:45]

Interim Chief Officer:

It depends which route it takes, and Rachel may want to make comment about expectations, but it all depends on what support is going to be put in, but also this is an area where we are absolutely being strengthened through the psychology and well-being team investments.

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

I think it depends which level of need you mean. There is a formal process of timeline for records of need, but there are several tiers of need that might identify itself before that, and we are working really hard with schools. We have got a really skilled teaching workforce who understand about adapting their practice, who understand about making small tweaks and adjustments to their practice to meet the needs of young people and adapting in the moment. It can be as much as changing the way that you present or the way that you speak to a young person in the moment, understanding this person needs a little bit more quiet or this person needs a little bit more structure, right through to identifying young people who would benefit from much smaller groups in a specialist setting or might need a completely modified curriculum. It really depends on the level of need, but as Keith says, we have got a specialist team, we have got a specialist S.E.N.D. team, we have got a fully staffed education psychology team, and their recommendations are the way that it works. We run meetings regularly for schools where they have access to S.E.N.D. professionals, the educational psychology service and others. Any young person who they have identified as needing additional support they can discuss internally in their school with their S.E.N.C.O. and then if the S.E.N.C.O. is saying: "Let us get a bit more advice" they can bring it to a panel who will then look at that young person in the round. There is an opportunity to say what feels like high needs in one school may not feel like high needs in another, so a school who is handling different kinds of needs might say: "When we see a young person with that barrier to learning, we do this" and they can share their expertise. There are different ways of doing it and they are tracking it, but there are lots of opportunities for specialists to support staff.

Deputy V. Li:

I did put one written question to your department last week and I was asking for the outdoor space and also the dedicated space for children with special educational needs across the schools, across

Island. So 3 primary schools, First Tower, Mont Nicolle and St. Luke's, have no dedicated spaces for children with special educational needs or support for those children within the mainstream facilities as required. If one of those schools needs to create a dedicated space, how would it be funded, given that there is no capital allocated for the accessibility works after 2026?

Interim Chief Officer:

I think I come back to the answer that I gave before. It is absolutely recognised that the school estate will need to adapt to education in 2026, 2027, 2028 and beyond, and the schools that you mention obviously have challenges in terms of space and building layout. It does not mean that things cannot be done. If we recognise a need that was absolutely essential, although those budgets are low, we do look to reinvest from other parts of the department and that is part of what we do in our finance meetings all the time. If we see a pressure, we see a need and we need a risk to mitigate, then we do direct funding.

Deputy V. Li:

Thank you for the answer. When I went to the schools during the Democracy Week, some of the students gave me their feedback. I asked them the question: "If you were a politician or sat in the States Chamber, what would you want to change?" Several students talked about they do not have the space when it is wet weather. Of course I said: "There is no bad weather, there is just bad clothing." However, we do need to consider those things when several schools gave that answer, they rely solely on the classrooms for wet weather and some have no green space. Is there any standard right now we have for play and outdoor learning space?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. I was going to say of course we inherit the schools that we have already got, so we are not starting from a blank position where we could say the school must have this amount of space and so on. We have to work with what we have already got, and that is why there is a very strong need for the new town primary school. What we have been doing with that is assessing all the possible sites to see if they are suitable, because it needs quite a big area of space for us to provide those green spaces that the children need, which they do not have enough of at some of the town primary schools at the moment. We have been looking at all possible sites for that new town primary school. We thought we had completed that piece of work, and the outcome was that it has to be on Gas Place because nowhere else was big enough or suitable, and then we are looking again because we thought there might be some other possibilities, so we are working on that at the moment. But what remains is that there must be a new town primary school for some of the reasons you just mentioned around space that children need. We cannot make a school like St. Luke's bigger. It is a lovely school in the way that it is run, but the building is completely inadequate. That is one of our solutions to what you have mentioned.

Interim Chief Officer:

Yes, and when we have the opportunity to build new schools, which occasionally we have done, then there are standards that we follow in terms of outside space, inside space and so on. But they are adapting as well as the changing needs of children and young people. We need to be reviewing those too to make sure that the space is adequate and enables us to deliver a thriving curriculum.

Deputy V. Li:

Thank you. Shall we move to higher education?

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Before I start, I need to declare that I have been governor at Highlands College, but I had my last meeting on Tuesday, so I am no longer a governor of the college. I just wanted to have 9 years up there and it has been a wonderful experience.

The Connétable of Grouville:

But you got out, did you not?

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Yes. I have loved every minute of it.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

That must have been a really nice thing to do.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

I have loved it, I have absolutely loved it. The previous panel identified limited progression opportunities beyond level 3 as a key concern. What measurable actions has the Government taken since the publication the Lifelong Learning Review to improve progression into levels 4 and 6, higher education, high apprenticeships and how will success be judged? Before I go further, could you, for the benefit of the panel, public and people listening, explain what the various levels equate to and what they mean?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, I am happy to talk about it generally, but I might not be the best person to describe the different levels, in case I say something wrong.

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

Level 2, if we start there. Oh, maybe I am going to get it wrong. You do G.C.S.E.s, which are level 2 qualifications, and then at 18-plus you do level 3 qualifications, so that could be a B.T.E.C. (Business and Technology Education Council), that could be A-levels, that could be a C.A.C.H.E. (Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education) level 3. There are a number, but it is about the number of years you have studied. Each additional year that you do after the end of sixth form, post-18, counts as a level of study. So a 3-year degree would take you through levels 4, 5 and 6. If you achieve a degree, a straight degree, then you achieve a level 6 qualification. If you then do a postgraduate qualification, so a Master's, a postgraduate certificate of education, that sort of thing, then that is a level 7 qualification. Thank goodness I remembered.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Deserves a round of applause, I think.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Thank you very much for that.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Your question, was it on just higher education or was that including further education?

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Lifelong learning. The previous panel identified limited progression opportunities beyond level 3 as a key concern. What measurable actions has the Government taken since the publication of the Lifelong Learning Review to improve progression levels into levels 4 and 6 into higher education, high apprenticeships?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Thank you. We have been doing a lot of work on this already on the lifelong learning generally. That is any particular type of training as well as apprenticeships and degrees and so on. We have already been making some small tweaks around the legislation where we have seen that the funding has not been fair enough as it should be. That has been something we have been working on. The bigger picture is obviously it is going to take a little bit of time to put right, because our plans to improve this overall is that we are going to have a new campus for further and higher education, so around that we plan to bring in more choice of degrees. That will help people an awful lot, because there are some young people who do not benefit from going away at that stage in their lives, so we are going to aim to have more on-Island provision. I am just trying to think what else. We had a 3-hour meeting yesterday around apprenticeships and lifelong learning, which was based around more practical areas like construction and so on. For the degree level, like I said, we have done

these tweaks, where we are focusing on what we are going to be doing when we bring in the new campus. Am I forgetting anything at the moment?

Interim Chief Officer:

There is the opportunity to study distance learning.

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

The flexible approach.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, the funding has increased for studying by distance learning. The funding in general is - I have got the figures here somewhere - as the fees go up for courses in the U.K. we will adjust our funding to cover that. I cannot find my notes at the moment, but also there is the increase. Is it by R.P.I. (Retail Prices Index)? We brought in a definite planned increase.

Policy Officer:

Do you want me to come in here?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, please.

Policy Officer:

If I take a step back firstly, to get access to higher education, there are other routes. Someone could go into a level 3 apprenticeship, for example. That is not what we deem higher education, which is level 4. That does not mean that there is not a person progressing. We have very good destination data from Highlands where they are either in further education training or they go into work. In terms of what we are doing in student finance, the focus has been and still is on broadening eligibility criteria, looking at ways we can get more people who are able to access student finance in the first instance, and we have been having discussions recently about that, and then also how we can support flexible learning. That is looking at how we treat anything that does not follow that traditional full-time linear 3-year degree. Distance learning was one of those big focus areas for accessing more flexible funding, and we made a lot of changes there that allow people to pause, re-enter, and they can do that over a number of years. That was quite a big change. In terms of what you were talking about in terms of fees, U.K. fees will increase and we have already put in place the legislative amendments so that our tuition fee cap will match that. That will continue to happen. We are also adjusting grants and income thresholds for inflation. We have changed the process this year, where we have moved some of the timelines to allow us to do that quicker, so that when the application window opens, we are able to award letters quicker because the previous process was just causing

a bit of a backlog. We are waiting for September C.P.I. (Consumer Price Index) in the U.K. to be published, which will be this month - in about a week, I think - so then we can do the calculations and then we should be ready by January at the latest to publish what the new income thresholds will be and the new maintenance grant amounts.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Excellent, and of course the progression is all going to be lots of opportunities to go down to the new campus, which is so exciting to hear. We have had that on the agenda at college meetings for ever. Has the campus been identified? Have I missed something? Has there been an identification? So having won this budget, but there is no ...

Interim Chief Officer:

Not of the site at the moment, no.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Not of the site?

Interim Chief Officer:

But obviously we have got to be planning in the background.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

A tiny step forward, you have just got to wait for a ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

If we just hear about possibilities and look at what ...

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

That is the big game-changer.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, but we have got the plans in place to go ahead with more feasibility work, some pre-planning stuff.

Interim Chief Officer:

That is correct, yes. There are things we can be getting on with in terms of what does that new policy look like.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

It is just that we have been here before.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, it is now in the Common Strategic Policy and it is definitely going ahead, and it is very strongly supported by Council of Ministers.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

One to watch.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

So it is going to happen. There is a lot of things that we have got under discussion, because we have to prioritise as we go along, but things like supporting more modular lifelong learning, those modular courses and so on, which might be a 15-credit one or something, things like that, we are looking into these things.

[14:00]

Policy Officer:

I think maybe on that point it is about we may need to look at our guidance and make it clear to people that there is funding available. That was something we took away yesterday. There are things that are not necessarily cost-related, it is about clarity of what you are allowed to access in the first place.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

What will help with that is that we are going to have the ... what is it? Not the one-stop shop, but the place online where you will be able to see all of the training opportunities. That is going ahead.

Deputy V. Li:

So there will be a portal?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. I think our timeline for that is being worked on at the moment right now, and we should have that in 2027 at some point. We should have it up and running.

Policy Officer:

Yes, towards the end of 2027.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, and then of course we have to look at things like postgraduate funding, and when I say “look at it”, that is what I mean, because it is a big subject.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Thank you very much. What is the Government’s overall strategy for post-16 education and training and how does it integrate vocational education with higher education and employment pathways?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

That is a big question.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

It is, sorry.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is about strategy.

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

Could you repeat that, please?

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Yes. What is the Government’s overall strategy for post-16 education and training and how does it integrate vocational education with higher education and employment pathways? How is it all going to ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We do have a lot of work done by Skills Jersey, where there is an awful lot of data collected, and from that the work can be done to see where the highest needs are. I would like to see more of this made public because there is so much good work done and I do not think it is recognised sometimes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Yes, okay.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We have got that aspect.

Interim Chief Officer:

I think there is obviously the opportunity, Minister, that you are really passionate about in terms of young people at 14 having the opportunity to go down that vocational technical pathway or at least having the opportunity to access courses and having equity in the system.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, that is one of my priorities, to make sure that young people in their secondary schools have access to do what best suits them with their learning. Some of them might prefer to do a lot more vocational technology. I know that we have Grainville and Haute Vallée having some of the children go up for the day to Highlands and can learn there. Then at Le Rocquier they have a special area for all the different forms of B.T.E.C.s, is it not? That is what they do? We want to make sure there is the consistency across the secondary schools and are checking up on it.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Yes. I think the biggest piece is the employment pathways. Having employers having input into what is available and being able to be agile enough to change that with a moving market and the things that are going on within employment, that is a big piece of a strategy, I would imagine.

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

One of the things we always look at when we are evaluating any of our organisations is the destinations of the young people and how successfully they transition to the next stage. It is really important that a young person leaves year 6 in their best position to transition to year 7, so that they can take the next step to learning. You want to transition from nursery to the start of primary school in the strongest position. It is exactly the same at 16-plus and at 18-plus. For example, Highlands College, I think 91 per cent of their graduates are in employment or in training within 2 months of graduating and that is a really positive statistic. We have more than 1,000 young people at university in any particular year across all the year groups. It is harder for us to track their destinations if they move on and out, but we are aware of looking at those destinations. It is about communicating with our local economy and understanding what the business needs are of the Island but also making sure that young people have choices that fit their interests. I think what we know now more than ever is it is very unlikely that young people are going to go on a single pathway and take one career all the way through.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Absolutely.

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

I think the purpose of education is to give young people an opportunity to have the development of their skills so that they can adapt to a changing work environment for the rest of their lives. It is not about being ready to just be a medic or just be a teacher or just be an engineer or just work in agriculture. It is much more about a rounded skillset, a confident young person who can present their views, defend their positions and then adapt to what we just do not know is coming.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Yes, absolutely.

Policy Officer:

Do you want to talk a bit about the Skills Development Scheme and we just talk a bit about that?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I was just going to say that just yesterday we were talking about how we might be able to make improvements to that sort of bridge between school and what the person does next. We think that we could do more there. There is an awful lot of, like I said, data we receive. I would just like that to be more public. But there was more that we were thinking about, was there not?

Policy Officer:

For example, Skills Jersey have been working on preparing - I can't remember the right terminology they are using - a skills intelligence pack. They are going to have a version for young people and also for the general public, which is where they have done lots of analysis to identify current and projected skill shortages in the Island. That information is what informs the allocation of funding from the Skills Development Scheme, which is targeted funding to either set up or enhance a training pathway that does not exist on the Island, is oversubscribed or needs to be modernised. That was what we had the meeting about, was what we might look at prioritising for funding. But that information pack, Skills Jersey will be publishing something and that allows young people to make informed decisions where they can see: "If I take this route, I know that there is going to be a demand for people with those skills in X number of years." Skills Jersey are supporting the setup of that training course. That may involve subsidised fees if there is a cost; that might incentivise people enrolling on that pathway, for example. Employers and sector representative bodies are part of that analysis. Employers are very much involved in identifying those skills: what is the appropriate training pathway and when it needs to be set up?

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

The interesting thing of everybody said today, not one word of careers or careers adviser or career pathways has been mentioned, so while there is a lot of effort put into nursery going into the next

school, making sure they are in the best place, that career talk and that career pathway needs to start early, so that when they get to the end it is not like: “Gosh, I have got to make a decision and find a career”, that there is something to be integrated within that pathway. For me, I am passionate about it, sorry.

Policy Officer:

The careers advisers in different schools are also in that dialogue with Skills Jersey and they have been sharing with them the information they have and assessing: “Is it useful and how should we package it so that you can use it more effectively?” That careers advice happens earlier on.

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

I think they are strengthening their work all the time, are they not, Skills Jersey? They are at the point where they want to do a lot more with schools because they recognise that.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, they are doing a lot of work on that.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Yes. I am sorry to go on a tangent, Chair, but the careers teachers in the schools are not really identified because they are careers teachers. From my recollection, I do not know how it happens now, but it is for the teacher that does not have a great deal of things going on in whatever topic they have got. The careers teachers in the schools are not aligned or under the same governance as the careers teachers at Skills Jersey. I think there is some joining up there that could be done so that there is a consistent message and a consistent journey, that that is ...

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

I think that is the work that is ongoing to strengthen those relationships.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. Yet in fact as a Scrutiny Panel - and we are doing this Lifelong Learning Review - we spoke to young people from the Youth Assembly and got the feedback from them about what they heard about skills teaching in schools and so on. We know we can probably make some improvements there. I wanted to just mention as well that some of the work that is done by Skills Jersey - in consultation with employers and others, which can take years to come into effect - is a good example of the Green Lab at Highlands. I have got the name wrong again, have I not? It is not the Green Lab, it is the Green ...

Policy Officer:

Green Skills, the Green Skills Academy.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is Green Skills Academy. It was lovely to go up there and speak to the apprentices, who were all very keen to get started. I think it is interesting as well for us to work with business in the private sector. We have already had one meeting around the finance side of things to see about public and private partnership working. There is another one coming up soon. We are exploring all that angle as well of where we can work more collaboratively with industry.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Thank you. Nothing better than growing our own, and if we do it properly, we can do it really well. What data does the Government collect on post-16 destinations? What do the most recent figures show for progression into universities, apprenticeships, further education and employment? A question really around the data.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think we have got that data, have we not? We need more data for what happens to them as they are doing their degrees and afterwards.

Policy Officer:

We have data on year 11s who continue their studies, so that for the last year sits at around 90 per cent. The numbers in terms of going into higher education, I do not have a percentage. But we can look at the numbers who access student finance, but then the number who do not access student finance, we can then get data from the U.K. on anyone who has a registered Jersey address. But then we do not necessarily have that relationship with the statistical authority in various other countries. We know that there will be people from Jersey who go to other countries. Student finance sits at around 1,200 generally at any one time that we are supporting, that they could be at any stage in their learning. Then the number we know in the U.K. is around 1,500; it fluctuates.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Then do we track the returners at any point, comebacks? I know that it is a tricky one.

Policy Officer:

It is tricky.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We were discussing this as well, were we not?

Policy Officer:

We were discussing it. There is not really any way to force someone to disclose where they are. If they do not come back to Jersey there is not necessarily a way for us to know that. Are they taking a gap year? Are they intending to come back? We can look at it, but I do not have an immediate answer.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We were talking about being able to contact them while they are doing their degrees and talk about opportunities that may be coming up in the Island as well.

Policy Officer:

Yes, we have that. It is just that historically when we try to reach out I do not think there has been much interest in engaging. Skills Jersey provided that function: surveys, email shots et cetera, opportunities and there was not really necessarily much engagement. You could maybe enforce replying to surveys to get your funding but I am not sure if that is something we would want to do.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We could probably do more, but the fact is I think that they are all busy enjoying themselves as well as studying.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

To fill in a survey there has got to be something in it for them. If it just a survey and there is nothing in it for them, like attractions of why they would come back to Jersey where the jobs are, so that careers piece carries on. If they were at university here they would probably get more interaction about destinations and the jobs. Because they are off-Island doing their degrees, we probably lose that interaction with them. I think there is something that we could do in order to attract them back. If we fund them to go off and do a university degree, a lot of them, not necessarily to come back immediately, but I think there is a lot of talent that we could attract back to Jersey for some really key roles that they may not know are available.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We have been looking at it, if there is a way that we can do more.

Policy Officer:

Yes, and it crosses over, I think, to various ministerial remits as well because a reason to come back to Jersey is not necessarily sitting under the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning's remit; it is about how attractive is Jersey in general? It is across department discussion.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, it is probably a bit of a longer-term piece that we can look at and ...

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

No, I agree. It probably goes on to this question: how is the Government measuring the success of post-16 destinations and ensuring young people's progress into pathways that meet both their aspirations and Jersey's skills need?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We do have a fair amount of data on them before they go away. I do not know if I have got it here though. We might have to ...

Policy Officer:

We have given some figures already around progression from year 11 into year 12 and then numbers going into higher education. We know that there is quite strong progression anyway. In terms of, for example, a qualitative conversation, there was a discussion by the previous Minister, a visit to all schools to understand young people's views on their post-16 options. The discussions were quite informal, which gave space for young people to talk around what happens before and long term. We did publish a report with the findings. Mainly the key findings were they wanted access to more work experience earlier on, they wanted the ability to blend vocational and academic so they could have a more diverse pathway. Then there was some sort of suggestion of their limited opportunities in Jersey and maybe the job that they want to do is not there. That is not really something for education provision to fix; that is for jobs need to exist.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

They might do, but they feel that they do not, but they might. I could go on for hours about that, but I will not.

[14:15]

Let me just see where I am. Sorry, I have lost my thread. No, I have done that one, this one. What assessment is being made of the availability of level 4 to level 6 qualifications in Jersey and are there plans to expand their local provision? I think you have probably touched a little bit on that with the new campus but ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. One of the things I meant to say as well is that we also made it a priority to see how we can fit in some of the new fee levels that are going to be in 2028 in the U.K. ...

Policy Officer:

They are going to be phased in from 2027 up until around 2030.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We are looking at 3 particular ones or seeing how we can maybe bring that in.

Policy Officer:

Yes, there will be 3 that will initially be launched in 2027, but the content and a number of those qualifications have not been fully scoped yet. We are monitoring it closely but it would be a bit premature for us to plan to introduce anything at the moment, but we are monitoring it.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Because we need to make sure that the young people here have access to the qualifications that they would in the U.K. as much as we can. It is a priority that we are working on that now. Like you said, it is still quite early stage as well, but we have to try and be ready as much as we can.

Policy Officer:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Thank you. In July you changed how student finances are rated, linking income thresholds to actual average earnings from September 2027. Beyond uprating, has the scheme as a whole been reviewed since it was introduced in 2018? If not, will you commit to a full review, including postgraduate funding and Jersey bursary?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I do not think I can commit to a full review at the moment because we have got so much that we are doing already. But I can say that we have discussed all those pieces that you have just mentioned, the postgraduate and the funding. We have been having meetings where we can just brainstorm and come up with anything. We are looking at all possible options. It is a big piece of work.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Yes, huge. I can imagine.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

But it is important, is it not?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

What is the current uptake of higher degree apprenticeships and does the Minister believe there are sufficient opportunities available to meet demand?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We, I think, mentioned the uptake on it recently ...

Policy Officer:

I do not think we have a number to hand on high degree apprenticeships on-Island. We have those numbers on higher education generally but we have not broken it down to that granular detail. We could probably provide that afterwards.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. What was the second part of your question, sorry?

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Apologies. Are there sufficient opportunities available to meet demand?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Okay, so ...

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

No, hang on, that was not the right question, I beg your pardon. It is, yes, sorry. Believe that there are sufficient opportunities available to meet demand.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Sorry, I have scribbled so much over my notes I cannot see the words.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

No, I do the same. We have to think about demand, but of course in a small island it is difficult if we are planning a course and then only 2 people want to take it up. It is quite a difficult thing ...

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Must be employer piece comes into it.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is quite a difficult thing to do, is it not? But we can do a lot more, I think, by using the distance learning options as well. I think we are quite lucky in that way. We are going to have a lot more opportunity to bring more in and work with Highlands. Again, it is another thing we have discussed yesterday. I think that it is maybe not so much the demand side but we have to think carefully about what we can offer that people will take up. There is, as I say, more opportunity now than there has been.

Policy Officer:

Yes. We have talked about that we would like to undertake some more in-person discussion with people to fill the gaps in the data that we have because we have got lots of data, but it does not necessarily help us understand decision-making motivations. We do not really understand if people do not engage with due compliance, for example, we do not know what the reasons are. We have talked about doing a very comprehensive piece of engagement with people, different groups, to understand what is it about our current provision that is not meeting their needs. It might not be financial, it might be where it is delivered, when it is delivered, how it is delivered. We need to get people to tell us what it is that they want and then build on that.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Brilliant, thank you. How is the Government ensuring that students and parents have access to impartial and comprehensive information about all post-16 options, including university, apprentices and technical pathways? You mentioned a portal, did you not?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think we are going to have that online portal up and running and it will bring in all the training and further and higher education options into one place. That is, I think, the most useful ...

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Yes, thank you.

Deputy V. Li:

Is that going to sit under Education or is that going to sit in Digital Service? Is the portal going to sit under Education or is that ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Under Education, yes.

Deputy V. Li:

Okay. Which team is going to be in charge of ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Skills Jersey is going to ...

Policy Officer:

It is Skills Jersey who are looking at it, but we have not made any firm decisions yet what it will be, where it will sit et cetera. It is a bit premature to say at the moment.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Is that early days?

Policy Officer:

Sorry?

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Is that still early days?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The sort of work that is going on at the moment is about what the content should be and things like that.

Policy Officer:

Yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There is work going on right now on this online portal.

Policy Officer:

Yes. We just have not reached the end date where we can confirm some of those questions.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

How will the proposed new Highlands campus improve post-16 progression opportunities, particularly for higher-level qualifications and degree study? How will that improve that?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We will have more courses available, I think, and young people who do not want to leave the Island for whatever reason, or they have responsibilities here or they think it would be more affordable, can stay on-Island and take advantage of doing those degree courses.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

But we already offer the degree courses, do we not, at the current ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There is more degree courses, yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Yes.

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

I think it is also about being future ready. The existing Highlands campus is really quite old and modern F.E.H.E. requires much more flexible buildings, much more flexible provisions. When you design a building like that now, you do not design it with set rooms labelled as departments, you create a space that can flex to create a new vocational technical pathway. You might stand one up for 2 years, you might close it down for 2 years and then open it up again. You need to structure all of your base rooms and, yes, everything, the electronics, the whole engineering of that space is a completely different piece of work to the building that Highlands College is currently working in. We would be looking to build a fit for purpose, future-proof building, which will then enable us to flex courses as we need to develop them. I think that is the objective really of the new build.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

In town, closer to employers to be able to get work experience even out of the whole curriculum.

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

The whole point of vocational learning, technical learning is that you have a front shop, you have a front-facing organisation and Highlands does that really well at the moment with its restaurant, with its hair and beauty areas, but it is a bit of a trek. People have to choose to go to there, rather than walk past, see the front shop and then go through the door. I think it is about raising the profile, giving that equity. It will be really exciting.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is going to be a really exciting opportunity, is it not? It is going to be great.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Very. What is the Government's offer for adults, community education, retraining, basic skills such as literacy, numeracy and digital? How many adults are using it?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

For adults for the lifelong learning, we want people to be able to do the training at any age for the courses. I do not know if you can add to that.

Policy Officer:

I think this comes back to the in-depth conversations we want to have with people to understand what are the needs and what are the barriers currently with what we currently provide. Once we have had those discussions with certain groups, we can then look at how we can respond to address those.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

As a team we have gone back to the review that was produced during Scrutiny and we have gone through all these points and saying: "Where should we take this on?" The overriding aspect probably is identifying properly the barriers to somebody doing the training and the learning that they want to do. That is probably the biggest part I think we are doing, yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

People who are looking to work longer and maybe switching careers later in life, like the youngsters are going to be changing more often. I did a career switch at 64 and I need to go back and do some learning and summary training, so access to courses is going to be vital.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, so we have to ensure that that is available and people know about it as well.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Yes, and then there is the whole well-being side with training. Has funding for adult and community education risen or fallen over the last 3 years?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The funding we have got has risen, if anything, that is it ...

Associate Director of Policy and Strategy for Education:

I do not have that detail.

Interim Chief Officer:

I do not have that detail.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I was thinking about the funding for studying a degree, for example.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Within community.

Interim Chief Officer:

I see that has increased.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The apprenticeship funding ...

Interim Chief Officer:

Studying for adult learning.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Community learning.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The separate adult learning, which is not a degree and not apprenticeship training then.

Policy Officer:

Do you mean professional?

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Adult and community education, being able to go to a night class and A.C.E. (Adult & Community Education) and all sorts of that measuring improvement.

Interim Chief Officer:

I think most of that pays for itself in terms of the fees that they charge for those courses, but we will get you any detail if there has been any increase in cost.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

How are adults who care for others or on low incomes able to participate in those courses?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

They are self-funding.

Interim Chief Officer:

I need to come back to you on that.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Okay, thank you. That is all my questions.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

I think that is the end of our hearing for today and really appreciate your time, Minister, Assistant Minister and all your officers, thank you.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Okay, all right. Thank you very much.

[14:26]