



Children, Education and Home Affairs

Scrutiny Panel

Budget Review

Witness: Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Tuesday, 28th October 2025

Panel:

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

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade

Witnesses:

Deputy R.J. Ward of St. Helier Central, the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

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

Mr. J. Williams, Programme Director, Children, Young People, Education and Skills

Ms. A. Homer, Head of Finance Business Partnering, Children, Young People, Education and Skills

[12:15]

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

Welcome to this public hearing of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. Today is 28th October and this is our public hearing with the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning in relation to the panel's review of the proposed Government Plan or budget, 2026 to 2029. So I would like to draw everyone's attention to the following. The hearing will be filmed and streamed live. The recording and transcript will be published afterwards on the States Assembly website. All electronic devices, including mobile phones, should be switched to silent. So I am Deputy Catherine Curtis, the Chair of the panel.

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade:

I am Deputy Helen Miles; I am a member of the panel.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Deputy Rob Ward, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning.

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

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

Head of Finance Business Partnering, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Anne Homer, Head of Finance Business Partnering to C.Y.P.E.S.

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

Jonathan Williams, Programme Director for C.Y.P.E.S.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

We just have 45 minutes for this hearing, so we need to try to keep the questions and answers brief. So to begin, Minister, please can you confirm if there were any challenging decisions to be made as part of the drafting of the proposed Education and Lifelong Learning Budget for 2026?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, there were always challenging decisions, there is no doubt. In terms of challenging decisions, I think it is more about making our priorities, to be quite frank, because we want to prioritise the 3 areas of the C.S.P. (Common Strategic Policy), which I will not go through again because we talked about it yesterday. That means that perhaps other things are not seen as being prioritised, but they are business as usual with a drive to try to get as much done as possible. Keith, I do not know if you have got anything that you think was most challenging, because I know you front line on a lot of these discussions as well.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

But also, if there is any bids for funding which were rejected, if you could mention those.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I do not think there were, because of the focus that we had on the C.S.P.

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

I think it is probably just fair to say that we have spent a huge amount of time this year looking at our finances, particularly with schools, and we continue that work into 2026 to ensure that we can support schools as best as they can to manage within their budgets that they have available. So that has not been a request for additional funding, that has been about how we manage our finances internally within the business. That has been the question.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So there has been a focus on managing.

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

There has been a significant focus just in terms of the governance arrangements about how we spend money, how we support schools, about the information that we provide to schools for them to be making decisions for the budgets that they manage. So that has been challenging throughout the year, but an absolutely necessary step because we want to make sure that we are as effective as possible with our funding.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thanks. My next question is about savings. We see that there is savings of £1.2 million due in 2026 through office and roles. So please could you outline how these proposed savings will be made?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, the first thing I would say is they are not front-line roles. There will not be staffing in schools. There will not be staff on the front line delivering our services. The vast, vast majority of our money goes to direct delivery of services we were talking about earlier outside of this room. So it would not be those. So this is about, if you like, looking at what roles perhaps will not be replaced in other areas in order that we can make savings without affecting the services we provide. I do not know if you want to add to that as well, but that is the way I see those savings.

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

That is absolutely correct, Minister. We are looking at around 12 posts next year that we need to find internally. As the Minister says, these will not be front-line posts. We have the opportunity through reorganisation in the Centre to which we are actively looking at. I think we have mentioned to you before the relationship between schools and the relationship between the department. As roles come up, as people leave the organisation or move to other roles within the organisation, and we focus in on those roles to see if they are going to be needed going forward. If we think we can reorganise ourselves to absorb those roles, then we will. That has been how we have looked at it through 2025 and we will carry on in 2026 doing that.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

So I think just that piece of work, just to say that piece of work that is going on with the Centre and schools and that very direct relationship I think is going to enable a clearer picture of what, where, whether, there can be those savings if possible. I also think we will have a better working relationship and I think that is a really positive thing for schools in the end.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can you say what area those roles are likely to be absorbed or is it in different areas?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I cannot.

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

No, not for next year, but they will be central roles across the central services that currently support the back office and support some delivery of services. But it is as opportunities arise, we will be looking at whether we fill those places. As it is quite a large organisation, we do have turnover in staff. So as they come around, we will focus in on those services.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. On the subject of staff, from the details about Education and Lifelong Learning, full-time equivalent employees in the annex to the budget, we note that in comparison to last year's figures, there has been a growth of 68.1 across the department. Please, could you describe the reasons for that change?

Head of Finance Business Partnering, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Shall I do that?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, because you have explained this to me on a number of occasions but I think it might be better coming directly from you.

Head of Finance Business Partnering, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

So, across the department as a whole, we have gained 23 posts, which are about the growth scheme in P.P.A. (Performance and Procedures Audit). But this piece that you asked directly about the Chief Officer is the legacy piece. Do you remember last year we split into 2 heads of expenditure and we did it at haste and slightly mucked it up. We made the correction with the money, but we had the libraries and some of the commissioning roles on the one side. So, in the office of the Chief

Officer, which was a question that I think you asked directly, we have removed 3 posts completely across the 2 heads of expenditure. But 53 of them, we have just made a correction and moved them from out of C. & F. (Children and Families) into E.L.L. (Education and Lifelong Learning) to reunite them with the money. They just got missed in that.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Could you just explain what C. & F. and E.L.L. are?

Head of Finance Business Partnering, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Children and Families.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Just for anyone listening.

Head of Finance Business Partnering, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

I am so sorry. The old Minister for Children and Education's Ministry was split into 2 Ministries, Children and Families and Education and Lifelong Learning. We are here today at Education and Lifelong Learning. When the split occurred in 2025, we got some things the wrong side of that split. Then we corrected the money and this is the last piece of the correction to make the permitted F.T.E.s (full-time equivalents) catch up with them. So 53 of that movement, they are not extra people. We are just moving them out of Children and Families and into Education and Lifelong Learning so that they are reunited with the funding. I am sorry for that confusion. Hopefully we have got to the end of it now and I will not be saying something about this split in 2027.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think it was the right choice to get you to explain that, Anne.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

You said 53 of that number is not extra people, but some of them are extra people.

Head of Finance Business Partnering, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Not of the 53, out of that office of Chief Officer in education, you will see a net ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Sorry, you mentioned 23 posts growth.

Head of Finance Business Partnering, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

So when we look at our growth schemes, we have got £1.8 million worth for giving everybody an extra hour of protected preparation and admin time. To do that, there needs to be more teachers in the pot. So when we answered your question about the 53, the question was literally about the office of the Chief Officer. But when you look at the situation for the Ministry as a whole, there are some additional posts. There were 3 or 4 posts that got transferred out as well to health and the net position.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

But again, they are front-line posts, delivery of service.

Head of Finance Business Partnering, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

They are front-line teachers.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I get that, yes, it was just good to get the explanation.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

That is good. Thank you.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you. Just quite a few questions about capital projects, please. Could you describe the need for the major project for the new secondary school at Mont à l'Abbé?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Describe the ...?

Deputy H.M. Miles:

The need and the demand for the new school at Mont à l'Abbé.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, there is absolutely a demand for the new school at Mont à l'Abbé. I think I have said before that I think, as we go through that process now and as we look ahead, that demand may even be greater. We have to look very carefully about what we are going to build. I know you have done some work. You have been away to look at some builds, which I think would be more appropriate now than perhaps we started with. Would you like to explain those numbers?

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

Sorry, I do not want to give you the wrong figures either. I would need to follow up to show you our planned growth in numbers, but they are significantly rising at the moment. That is why we do need to increase the size of the secondary school because the secondary school, as it is at the moment on the Haute Vallée site, just simply is not large enough. Then we have looked at the combined growth across the primary and secondary schools as they will be in the future and being on the same site, and I will be able to confirm with you what we anticipate that overall number to be. We have done all that planning.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

£400,000 budgeted for 2026 for the new secondary school. How is that funding going to be utilised in 2026?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Feasibility and indicative designs for the school, following the recent visit to similar schools in the U.K. (United Kingdom) to review size, use of space and the service within the schools, is the sentence I read carefully because that is precisely what we need to do. I do think that we have seen, with the increasing need, we need to look really carefully at what we are going to build there. So this is a good step now. After that, the money is in 2027 now ingrained, is the phrase, in the Government Plan to get that build done.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

What is the anticipated timescale for getting the project to planning stage and then building stage?

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

So next year, leading into 2027, we will be working the scheme up through planning. So we would want planning permission to be granted in early 2027, or towards mid-2027, because we have money available in 2027 to start some of the build.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Because the budget says it has potential for the project to be accelerated. How will that affect the budget projections?

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

So that is going to be a conversation that we will have with Treasury. So we have access to the £400,000 that is earmarked in the Government Plan. There is also the potential for more money through feasibility, through the general feasibility pot. If we are able to really push these plans forward, we will be asking whether we can pull it into it. These are the conversations that we have to have, compared to other projects within the wider Government capital programme, and if there is

funding and we have the capacity to do that with our partners in J.P.H. (Jersey Property Holdings), then we will be making that case.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think that is really important to say, because the planning process, we all know about the planning process. I do not see how this should be so difficult, given it is a piece of land that we will have. So therefore I am hoping, and I would be hopeful, but then as soon as you say that, you know, it does not happen. So we will try to accelerate that project as quickly as we can. With also the proviso that we are also looking at what that project will be, because there is increasing need. So, from what could be seen as not as quick as we wanted, there could be something good that comes at the end of it.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

The named sponsoring department for the Le Squez project is Education and Lifelong Learning. We were just a bit confused why that was not with the other youth projects which come under Children and Families.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I thought it was. It should be.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, so is that an oversight then?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The other thing is as well, I do not know if it is part of this as well, because of the Le Squez school, some of the improvements there.

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

Yes, absolutely. I think you may ask questions later on about our improvements to schools pot. There are improvements to be done in Samarès School, but that is not linked to that line, so maybe there was the confusion, sorry.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, thank you. Within the major refurbishments and upgrades funding, there is funding for fire safety in the C.Y.P.E.S. estate. Can you describe where that funding is going to be required?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is across the estate, is it not?

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

It will be. I would have to provide you with the detail of where that will be. But we have a whole programme outlined for 2026, which J.P.H. are leading on and supported by officers within C.Y.P.E.S. So I would need to provide you that detail. But there will be a number of schools where work is going on, particularly, for example, around fire doors. That is a big, big project at the moment that is happening. So we can give you that detail.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

There is nothing put in the budget for beyond 2026 for fire safety. So is the assumption that everything will be done in 2026?

[12:30]

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I mean, there has to be an end point, and we would hope from the reports that we have now that we would have covered all of that work. I have to shoehorn in, if I may, that the quicker we build the new facilities, the more money we will save on these fire risks. That is a reality because modern schools built to higher, higher standards are future-proofed in terms of those standards.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Can you describe the working relationship that you have got with Jersey Property Holdings and I.H.E. (Infrastructure, Housing and Environment) to deliver these fire safety improvements?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think it has been very good; everybody has looked at it and thought, this is a huge task that has come forward, we have got to get on with it. The work has been going on at pace. I think whenever you do work in schools, it is challenging because at school children do not care whether you are trying to do work, they are trying to get on with their day. So there is always a challenge in terms of that work. It is not like in other Government buildings where you can say: "Go and sit in a different office for a day". So there are always challenges, but I think they have been as accommodating as they can be, and if there are issues, they are raised quickly and we will raise them quickly.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you. Again, within the major refurbishments and upgrades funding, there is funding for Highlands College. Can you again describe what the funding for 2026 will deliver?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, there are a number of projects. Shall we send some of those? I think we have sent them before.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

There was a list of some that had already been done or that were in process, so maybe an updated list.

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

So we do have a number of things.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

2 A4 pages.

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

Yes, for example, I can just go over some of them, but probably send you, which there is going to be work on heating systems. There is going to be work on internal fabric within buildings. There is going to be some ...

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think vents and cooling, for example.

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

Yes, and work on skylights and building on the roofs. There is just a huge ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

General maintenance.

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

Yes, which all adds up to the value of the projected spend for next year.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Again, no further funding is put in for maintenance beyond 2026. So, is there a long-term plan for the site?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, and I think one of the problems we have with these sites is, as they age, they do continually degrade, is the phrase. A lot of the mitigation that is going on now will deal with things long into the future and we hope there will be a lot less degradation that needs to be repaired in that way. I think

personally as well, we need to really genuinely look at a new build. There is some genuine prospect of that coming forward. Again, when we look at that, the savings made in this sort of repair need to be taken into account in those costings, because they will be significant, plus the improvement of facilities. But beyond 2027, we are hoping we get to a stage where it is in a much better place, let us put it that way, and that those costs will not be as high.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Given the priority in the C.S.P. for Lifelong Learning, why has no feasibility work for the future of Highlands been put into the Government Plan?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think it is because that is more a part of the Investment in Jersey Project. I think there is a delicacy, that is the wrong word, to say: "Okay, let us look at that project in the whole and see what we can do". To put it into the Government Plan, I think, would not be the right thing to do because it is a major project. I would also say as well, just to talk about Highlands into the future, if we get to a point where those repairs are made and a significant amount of money has been spent, then the other repairs really will be business as usual within the repairs funding that we have across our estate. Because so much work is going on with fire mitigation, et cetera, I hope we can get to a point where our estate is much improved and therefore it costs less into the future. In terms of where Highlands is, Highlands does function, it does very, very well. It does provide every single day. I do not want to work in that world of absolutes and say it will not do anything. It will. So I do not think there is the major, major risk of it not functioning in a way that perhaps has been talked about. But I understand that being talked about because you want to push for a new campus completely. If I was in charge of that college alone, I would do the same.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is there any idea about how much that feasibility work would cost?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Feasibility work of Highlands as it is now?

Deputy H.M. Miles:

On the Highlands College estate.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

No, I cannot give you a figure today. But I would want to look at the feasibility of a new build as well and combine those 2.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

A new build elsewhere?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, I think so. The word “feasibility” is key there. Is it feasible? Will it work? What would be the advantages? If there are advantages, then we need to be brave and say this is why we are doing this.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So no feasibility for 2026. Any feasibility stuff would come in 2027.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you. Can you confirm the projected timescale for the Gas Place site acquisition and the development now that the proposition is ...?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Now we have got through the States Assembly debate, the Gas Place, I would suggest the first thing is obtaining the land, which I believe will be soon, which is a step forward. Then we have got money this year for feasibility.

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

We have money out of the main feasibility pot, but we have build money coming in 2028.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, so the build in 2028. That has been delayed further and it is a real shame that it has. Back in the debate, is what I would say, I really hope that we can move forward with that project. Can I just say, the real key thing about that is the fact that it is a community facility. It is the first time we have had the opportunity to build a facility that from day one is there to serve the community as well. Because when we go to our other schools and we are going for a process of trying to open them up for sports facilities and community facilities, the challenges we face are they function as a school and they were not designed for that. This is the design for that. So now, if any other large projects elsewhere do not happen, I am more than happy to get on with it as quickly as possible.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Can I just ask why there is nothing in the budget for 2027, assuming the feasibility is done 2026?

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

So this will be just a kind of availability of money across the whole of the capital fund, but also looking at the capacity of officers who work on this. So we obviously have Mont à l'Abbé, which was seen as a priority because we need to get Mont à l'Abbé built. Then following just after that will be Gas Place.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, so at what point do you think the Gas Place school will move into major project stage?

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

Well, in 2028, in terms of when the construction starts.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, so still quite a while.

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

So there is a way to go, yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, it is quite disappointing, is it not?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, it is. It is significantly disappointing for me, seeing as we had this opportunity 4 years ago, 5 years ago, I think. However, I will say, I think one of the approaches we have taken in the department and across Government is to have a reality check in terms of what is feasible. Let us get on with things that we can get on with. That is why we have got La Passerelle Secondary, which should be available in the early new year. There were some pushbacks in terms of what was found in the building that have to be dealt with. It was inevitable. So that is working. We could get that done. We have got on and done it. I mean, these are these are plans. If we can speed up any of these plans, I would support that. If we can do that and show the benefit of that, obviously, as an Education Minister, any Education Minister would surely say: "Yes, get on with it".

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you. If the budget is approved, you are going to receive £3.8 million described as upgrades to C.Y.P.E.S. estates in 2026. It says the majority of that £3 million is school improvements. Can you just give us an indication of what that particular funding is going to deliver?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There is a whole list. We can send you a list of those things. So I will give you a range of things from aircon replacement that is happening, to outdoor works on nurseries, to cookery facilities, to fencing. It seems to be extraordinarily expensive, but I will not say that publicly.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So it is going to be the minor capital stuff, is it?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

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

Yes, absolutely. So what we do, just so the panel are aware, we do a huge amount of work in terms of identifying where risk is. We have a criteria because we get a lot of requests in from schools and then we have to score those, and then we end up with a priority list and then we look at our funding. So we have identified the projects for next year and it is the same process that we went through for this year and we have been able to deliver that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is that funding over and above the funding that has been put in for the fire safety improvements?

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

Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Totally separate budget lines.

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

That is totally separate. We also have the Asset Improvement Fund as well, which is done on the same basis of risk and scoring projects.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I have got a list of 32 projects. I will not read them all out because we are limited.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Another line in the budget provides for £300,000 for discrimination, disability and accessibility works.

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

Yes, that is right.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Can you just explain some of that, how that is going to be spent?

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

So, again, some of this will be budgeted, the Minister mentioned in the other pot, fencing often gets put in there, pack systems within schools.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Sorry, what is a pack system?

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

They have security systems, fob systems, alarms, upgrades to toilets to make them more accessible. We are replacing ball courts and fencing for outside play areas because they are trip hazards. So we are trying to keep them safe. There is a nature garden upgrade for one of the schools, which is related to the additional resource provision there as well. So, again, it is a similar process that we go through and we are able to use those funds.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

One thing we have noted is that, in the 2024 to 2027 Government Plan, the budget was much higher. It was over double, it was £700,000. So it has been reduced last year, reduced this year. Any particular reasons for that?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I am not sure because previously it may have included some of the fire mitigation stuff that we have taken out separately. I think we need to check that and get back to you because I think there was ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay. It just sounds like a heck of a drop.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, I mean, the fire mitigation became such a large project. It was taken out separately, and I think that is the right thing to do. But yes, we can get back to you to check that. I think there were also some specific works that were completed that were expensive from memory, looking back at that. Some projects that were particularly expensive and I cannot remember what it was now. I know you have talked to me about it, but we can get back to you and let you know about that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Sorry I cannot answer that.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, so I now have some questions about the 2- to 3-year-olds nursery. So, Minister, the budget indicates that the Government will fund 15 hours of childcare for all children aged 2 to 3 from 2026 onwards and £3 million has been budgeted for both 2026 and 2027, and then the funding changes to £1.8 million and 2028. Why has the funding been reduced after 2 years?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Jonathan, do you want to, because you can give a very concise answer to that?

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

Of course. The Minister had, from budget 2025-28, a contribution towards 2 to 3. That was going to be added to in the proposed budget in 2026 to 29. So that simply reflects that there was an increase in pre-approved budget from a former period in those years to which this 2026-29 budget adds.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Because the total amount is £7 million, not just the £3 million. There is money that is already there. So it basically is a significant amount of money and it is the first time it is there.

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

In summary terms, over the 4-year period, approximately £18 million is going to be invested in that scheme, of which £8.5 million is pre-approved from previous budgets, and just under £10 million, about £9.7 million is contained in budget 2026-29 proposals. So it is a combination of those 2.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I see. So about £18 million in total then, yes.

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

That is correct.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

How many children does the Government anticipate will benefit from this offer?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Good question. So the numbers in terms of 2- to 3-year-olds. Do you have those numbers?

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

Yes. So perhaps it is helpful to understand first of all the source. So we take our projections from Statistics Jersey. So we have a single source we are using. There are around 700 to 720 families, we think, that might be able to be benefiting. Of course, the comparisons of cohorts are not direct because we are not looking at birthdays and the 2 to 3 offer is effectively the 12 months prior to the Nursery Education Fund. So it is not on your second birthday; it is in the year that you are turning 3. So there is some little nuances in there, but broadly speaking, around 720 families that might be able to benefit from this. We are anticipating the first year between 80 and 85 per cent of those will probably be wanting to participate. Then the business case steps it up to 90 per cent thereafter. So that is roughly the number. The other insight we have that the Minister was able to benefit from is we conduct, I think as you know, a survey in quarter 4 from providers. An indication in quarter 4 of last year, which is our most recent survey, is that somewhere around 700 children were already booked in with nursery settings or childminders. What we do not know to the extreme is was that booking for an hour or was that booking for 15 hours? So we do not know the extent to which the child that was booked was enjoying something around about the 15 hours, maybe more, maybe less. But it is an indication for planning purposes. So 720 of which we are anticipating around 80 to 85 per cent might want to participate in year one.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

How did you get that figure of 700 families?

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

So the figure of 700 comes from the provider response survey. So we go out to providers, we ask a number of questions around workforce, around compensation, around capacity, both used and unused. If we sum up the amount of booked places, I think the 2- to 3-year-olds from nurseries and from childminders, the cohort group involved in the Minister's plans, that is around 700. So that is how we got that figure. But again, we are treating all of these things cautiously. That is a survey response. That is not more in depth than that, but it helps us, for indicative purposes, plan for that expenditure.

[12:45]

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. So my next question is just about the start date, really. So if this is approved, can you confirm if the administration of the additional funding, making payments to the nurseries and childminders, will be in place for 1st January?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I hope so. There is still work to be done, also looking at how we administer the new scheme in the most effective way. But, depending on how the funding model works, we would want to have something in place in January, even if it is, in the worst-case scenario, there is a delay to payment. But the provision is for the year. You had a phrase on that.

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

It is a retrospective course. So the Minister has instructed us as officers to make sure that, if approved, parents have the full-year benefits. So it does not necessarily require the thing to be working, the button to be pressed on 1st January. Of course, we are all very aware that the approval, if granted, is in the States Assembly in mid-December. So we are working towards a couple of different operational methods, but I think the steer we have received is that the parent and the family receives full-year value, even if that means part payment in advance, part in arrears. That provides a bit of wriggle room in terms of implementation.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

But we will do absolutely everything possible to get that in place. But the whole-year benefit, I think, is really important for families so they can plan for that year. Also, if there are challenges in those first few months, we recognise that. But at least the money is there and we can start this.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So either it would be ready from 1st January or there would be retrospective funding applied.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. What messaging or communications will be made to parents about the timings?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, I think over the next few weeks, we will have a much, much clearer picture as to where we are and the way the funding model will be. Then we will start that communication. Of course, we have, it is the wrong phrase to say, but a captive audience because we know where the children are. I

think it is 85 per cent of them are already in nursery places. So we will know how to get to them, which is, I think, a very good thing.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So how will the Government support nurseries in making the change?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, depending on the funding model we have, I mean, seeing as that 85 per cent of children are already in a nursery place, it should not be insurmountable in any sort of way. It is about just getting the money into the right place at the right time. So that should be doable. We already have a structure with N.E.F. (Nursery Education Fund), which is it is simply transferable and we can move forward with that. So I think there are many ways in which we can do that. I mean, if there is a different model of funding that needs to be developed, we can do so quickly and we will do so as quickly as possible.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

All right. For those parents who maybe do not have their child in nursery anymore, maybe they would not be able to find a place for the hours they need. So would there be any help from the Government to place match or would that be left to the nurseries?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, I think we will always work with nurseries to try to help find the hours that people want. This may not be perfect. Families might say, "I did not quite get the hours that I want", but you are still getting 15 hours of childcare paid for. I think that is a really key point to put forward here. We do everything we can to try to support that with the team that we have that has a really good relationship with nurseries. We are in there all the time and with all of the providers. I think that is beneficial both to parents and to nurseries to match those hours that are available. Also, some parents might be quite flexible, if they are going back to work and say: "Well, I can be flexible, get the hours that I want", and that will really help.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So what analysis, if any, has been undertaken of the potential wider economic impact of this funding, and what discussions have you had with the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development on this subject, or plan to have?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, within the department, the Economy Department have helped us work with the providers to come up with the rates, and I think that was a really important piece of work. I think it was important

that it was not in C.Y.P.E.S., because it is a separate department looking at the scheme and looking with people. So that is the most important thing. That is the practical thing. In terms of discussions with the Minister, we have not had a lot of discussions on this, but I know it is supported around C.O.M. (Council of Ministers), so we want to see it happening. He was happy with officers to be involved. Most of this has been at officer level because this is about practicality of getting something to work. I, at a political level, will make sure that C.O.M. is agreeing with it and I will do my utmost in the Assembly to get it agreed hopefully; that is my role as much as anything. But then I have to work and trust the officers who know a great deal about this, particularly those in key areas and so on and so forth, who have got these good relationships to get this working. So I think there has been good communication. In terms of economic impact, it is a difficult one because it is not just about economic impact. It is about social impact, it is about well-being, it is about all of these other factors. But I personally believe there will be a positive economic impact of making this investment for the people.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So there has not been any analysis of the economic impact?

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

So an economic impact analysis has been conducted as part of the Government Plan process and the budget process. So that reflects, for example, that one of the benefits of a universal scheme versus a targeted scheme is ease of access and clarity of eligibility. So that reflects the fact that there is an expectation that some, this is then in terms of the analysis, some of that money that is effectively saved by parents on a consequence provided by the Minister might then be spent in Jersey. That has benefits, therefore, in terms of G.S.T. (Goods and Services Tax). But the Minister did not start with this being a policy to drive economic performance or participation. It is about the benefit to children and the benefit to parents and other aspects were knock on benefits.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It is just that we are asking about the economic impact at the moment. So was that work conducted by C.Y.P.E.S.?

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

No, that was done by the economy team.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Sorry, I did allude to that, but I did not make it as clear as that. So thank you, Jonathan.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Are there any plans to discuss this with the economy team, either at ministerial level or at officer level?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There have already been discussions at officer level, a great deal of discussions about the rate. When we had the meeting regards that, the Economy Department were along and we were working with them. I think this is about people doing the things that are relevant to them because they have got the best skills. So the Economy Department working out the rate and working out that possible economic impact is one thing, and then C.Y.P.E.S. working on the delivery of this scheme. So, yes, we are not closed to any communication and we would want that. But we also do not want to have discussions that are not necessary. I think it is a very supported scheme across Council of Ministers and I think personally, and I hope, across the Assembly.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. So the panel understands that the sector still faces significant workforce pressures. So, is there any evidence to show that this provision will increase the pressure on the workforce?

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

The Minister has alluded to the fact that there will be most likely some increase in demand as a consequence of the new benefit. Although evidence suggests that a lot of children are already in settings. So the consequence of that, of course, is that there might be some further workforce pressures. The Minister has set officers the challenge to have a second iteration, a second go at the workforce plan. So, while I have not had the opportunity to present back yet, we had, for example, a very constructive meeting with a very major local provider just last week. But they were giving us some experiences they face in their U.K. provision and how that might manifest positively in Jersey. So we are starting to share ideas about what might work and what might not work in Jersey based on experience in equivalent jurisdictions. But the idea is we have to have a plan back in front of the Minister on workforce development that considers qualifications, access to qualifications, the ability to move out of a parallel or equivalent role into a regulatory role in the context of counting for ratios. All that is part and parcel of one of the workstreams under the C.S.P.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. Also I would say flexibility in working. So if somebody wants to work 2 days, to enable that, I do not think we enable that enough across our workforce, to be quite frank, in just about any sector. I have no evidence to talk about other sectors, but I do feel that from what I have heard. There will be changes. I think the point where I have said earlier on, we are not going to do this until we believe there is space available. Because there are up to about 85 per cent already in nursery places, I think we are at a point where, if we do not do it now and we are waiting for utter perfection, we will

never get anything done. We have managed to win the argument over money, so let us get on and do as best we possibly can with this and support the sector.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

The last question I have got on this subject; the panel understands that there have been calls from the sector for more significant change to the funding model and approach. Can you tell us why that approach has not been taken, and why this particular one?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I am not entirely sure what that approach is. I do not think we can convolute the rate, which I think is a very fair and very reasonable rate, which is above what most nurseries charge anyway, with other funding models. We can look at that. It may well be that nurseries may prefer us to pay directly to parents. We can talk to Social Security and look at a model for doing that. That is not a problem at all. But the N.E.F. works, if you can get a system for 2- to 3-year-olds that works and is as simple or even more simplified, I think there are some discussions to be had, but I really hope that nurseries can look at this positively, get on board with it, and then we can get on with the work as quickly as possible after hopefully this is agreed in the Assembly. Then we can move forward with this and I think, within a few months, we will see that this is incredibly beneficial to parents and to nurseries.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Thank you.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Again, just some questions around revenue expenditure growth and specifically teachers' terms and conditions. So an additional £1.8 million per year for the next 4 years to fund changes to teachers' terms and conditions. Could you tell us why this change is required?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

This came from the settlement over the dispute. So it was partly paid, which we settled very quickly. The other part was terms and conditions. Terms and conditions discussions have been going on for years. So long that I can remember them. But this is the first time where we have said: "Okay, we will put a proportion of money towards providing the staffing to try to do something about contact time". Now, that is for extra staff. Also, as we go through the work with schools in terms of the way they are working together, more collaboration, we may be able to free up time there. But the really key principle is we are directing this money and those changes, as much as anything, into freeing up teachers to have the time to do their job. Because, if you allow that, they get better at it. More will stay, more will commit to the profession longer term, can survive doing that, and we have a

better workforce and we have a better education system. So this is the money that is linked to it. Could it be more? Of course it could be more, but we have never had anything before. I think we have had these positive discussions with the trade unions as well and that is a recognition of that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I was going to say about feedback and consultation with teachers and other stakeholders about the change, but it sounds like there has been an ongoing piece of work there.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, absolutely, and we will continue that dialogue. I think the dialogue with trade unions is very good. It is very open, very positive, and we genuinely appreciate that because it helps us have the difficult discussions sometimes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Have they indicated support for your proposals?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I believe so, yes.

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

Yes, absolutely. This has come out of the Terms and Conditions Working Group, which is a combination of officers centrally and union representatives that are trying to create more time for teachers to plan as the job is becoming more and more complex. It is a good thing.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you. Minister, the panel understands that there is no ring-fenced funding for the teaching of Jèrriais within the C.Y.P.E.S. budget. Can you confirm why that is the case?

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

We have funding for Jèrriais. I think your question is about it being ring-fenced.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

There is no line in the budget, it is not ring-fenced.

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

That is correct. We fund the service at an amount that we have done for a number of years now.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

But the teachers in Jèrriais are employed on teachers' terms and conditions. So they are funded within the department to teach Jèrriais. I think there has always been, not a distinction, but a question of where we are looking in terms of the teaching, the physical teaching and other cultural areas, and we are having discussions with the Economy Department as to how we would best define that split and have some clarity on that funding. I am very open to that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Do you think that the budget and therefore the posts should continue to sit with C.Y.P.E.S., or do you think they would be better sitting with the Sustainable Economic Development Department?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

The one thing I would say is, if you are on the teachers' terms and conditions, then you should be with C.Y.P.E.S., because I think, if you are going to be on the teachers' terms and conditions, there is a lot that goes with that in terms of standards, quality, training, what is being delivered, assessment, accountability, et cetera, et cetera. If you do not have that, then I think we have to question as to what scale that people are on. Do teachers want to become civil servants? I am not entirely sure they do. I think we can get that right in terms of what is the best model for that going forward. If there is clear evidence that the best model is to not stay in C.Y.P.E.S., I want to do whatever is best for that language going forward. At this moment in time, I think teachers being within C.Y.P.E.S. who are on teachers' terms and conditions, that makes sense. The clarity we need to have is the other work that is not teaching. Where does that fit? Now, that might fit best in heritage, and we are having discussions about that and what proportion of money, therefore, will go to heritage is and the best way to deliver that. But that I think is not clarity of purpose; it is like a division of labour.

[13:00]

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Would you envisage a situation whereby the budget for heritage language sits within the schools' funding formula?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

That would be really difficult because the funding formula has so many other features to it, but it is an interesting idea.

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

So I do not necessarily think the money in the formula, that may be complicated. However, looking at where the service is best led and where it can flourish at its most, is part of what we are looking at across the whole of this area.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

As part of the new strategy.

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

But we still have a Jèrriais service that we are committed to and, as the Minister says, we are looking at that kind of community teaching area at the moment and who is best to do that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Okay, thank you.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

We are just about out of time, but if I can ask just a couple of quick questions, that would be good, and then we will send the rest to you in writing, if that is okay. Just a question about the school meals programme, which has been rolled out very successfully, it seems. But we see that there is no funding proposed for 2029 and wondered if there would be changes to the funding in the future. I am thinking about the staffing as well, because there is a difference between Appetito and Caring Cooks and the way they work.

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

So do you mean in terms of growth funding or money in base budget? The money will be in base budget in 2029.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, so are there any plans to alter the way it is funded over the next few years?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

No. You can remember as well that, when the numbers start to decrease a little, so base funding, if we keep that base funding, can it meet that. If you are talking about extending it to free for everybody, I think that is a ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

No, I was just generally wondering about any changes to how it is done.

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

The funding is consistent over time.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think those models; we have modelled really well and I think the work that has gone on so far, we can maintain that project.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, because there is a difference in how many staff are needed as well, according to which operator.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, absolutely.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, just my last question then, or our last question to conclude the hearing, Minister, could you confirm if there are any other highlights that we have not covered?

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Highlights? Personally, I would say, getting money for new projects is always challenging. But I am very, very pleased that we have, I know we have already talked about it, but I do not think we have emphasised it enough, I am obviously pleased with the 2- to 3-year-olds, we really desperately want to get that to work, and I have to say the officers are taking a lot of pressure from me in terms of the speed and pushing it forward and I think they have done remarkable jobs, they really have. But I am very pleased with the tangible money, and I am sure there could be more, there could always be more, for the teachers' terms and conditions piece. Because that workforce is so vital for us as an Island. But supporting them in that way and having tangible amounts there means that I think we can start to see there is a genuine value there, we can start to address those terms and conditions and hours and time to do the job. That, I think, is more important. Let me put it this way, it is a bit of a boring one for many people, but it is absolutely vital.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

It is one of the recommendations from this panel in our Secondary Education Funding Review.

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, absolutely, and it is always nice to agree with the panel. So, shall we finish there?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, okay, we have finished, I think. Thank you very much, everyone. So that is that for our budget hearing.

[13:03]