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Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Online Harms Review

Witness: The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

Friday, 16th May 2025

Panel:

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

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville

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. A. Heaven - Assistant Director of Policy, Children, Young People, Education and Skills

Ms. A. Munn - Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills

[09:57]

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

Welcome to this special hearing on online harms of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel. Today is 16th May 2025 and we have one and a half hours for this hearing. If I draw everyone's attention to the following: this hearing will be filmed and streamed live. The recording and transcript will be published afterwards on the States Assembly website. All electronic devices, including mobile phones, should be switched to silent. I would ask that any members of the public who have joined us in the room today do not interfere in the proceedings and as soon as the hearing is closed please leave quietly. So, I am Deputy Catherine Curtis, the Chair of the panel.

Connétable M. Labey of Grouville:
I am Connétable Mark Labey from the Parish of Grouville and I am Vice Chair.

Deputy H.M. Miles of St. Brelade:
I am Deputy Helen Miles and I am a panel member.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Deputy Rob Ward, Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning.

Interim Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Keith Posner, Interim Chief Officer in C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills).

Assistant Director of Policy, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
I am Andrew Heaven, Assistant Director of Policy.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
I am Alexa Munn, Head of Governance and Digital for C.Y.P.E.S.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Okay. Thank you, everyone. So I have a general question to start with, just an opening paragraph. So online harms refer to a range of negative experiences and risks that people can encounter while using the internet. Minister, based on your understanding of the current legislation, policy and cultural context in Jersey, please can you share what you consider to be the top 3 protections that children in Jersey currently have? So this is not about policy and development, it is what they currently have.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I can talk about in schools, and there are a number of mitigation processes in schools for online learning. So the risk of digital harm is recognised and is an ongoing concern, and I think it will always remain an ongoing concern because it is a very changing world and we have to adapt to that. That concept is not new. It has been going on for a long time. There are various safeguarding measures in place, including software designed to mitigate harm in a digital environment, and they enable teachers to manage online risks and promote safer digital experiences for students when they are using online to teach.

[10:00]

For example, key flagged terms are used within digital systems to identify and mitigate potential harm. There are 2 pieces of software. One is Lightspeed, the other one is ...

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Activian.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Activian, yes. Okay, so there are 2 pieces of software that overlay online access in all of our schools. That is the safeguarding one. There is parental guidance with online safety to ensure parents are equipped to keep their child safe online. There has been a targeted campaign in collaboration with the N.S.P.C.C. (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) specifically on year 6 students. The school evaluation scheme that we use now, the Jersey Schools Review Framework, has a specific area of its review on safety and online safety so that schools are evaluated ... I am not going to use the word "judged" because it is not a judging process, it is an evaluation process and should include the schools. That is an integral part of what we are doing.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Okay, so I will just ask ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
There are a lot of others.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
... you for the top 3 that you thought were currently available for Jersey.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
The top 3 are the software that overlays our schools. I think the other one is the fact that it is part of the Schools Review Framework. It has become front and centre to what we are doing. I suppose the third one is that there is a mobile phone policy in every school. I have talked about this a number of times now in terms of schools. Indeed, on 15th May another school introduced a more stringent mobile phone policy after some work, but we will probably talk about that later.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Okay, great. So I think it is you next, is it not?

The Connétable of Grouville:
Yes, certainly. Thank you, Chair. Minister, in your opinion what is the role of schools and places of education in providing protection to children and young people from online harms, the role?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. The role is to give safe access if you are using school access to the internet for teaching. That is very important. The second is an education role itself. The information on how to behave online, what safe is online, and giving that access to digital knowledge and understanding of the world that we live in I think is a really important part of what we do in schools. Also, dealing with issues when they arise in conjunction with parents, safeguarding needs and a myriad of people who might be involved is an important role, but they are not the only people who have to be involved in that. So that is the main role of schools, I would say, is safe access online, but they have been drawn into the world of mobile phones, obviously. I think they have done an enormous amount of work to try to deal with that issue as well.

The Connétable of Grouville:

In your opinion, Minister, how important is education in providing a defence against online harms and promoting digital safety in comparison to other factors such as legislation?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I do not know how to compare in terms of percentages. I am obviously horrendously biased towards the importance of education because it is. I would say it is really important that young people have access to an online world that is safe so that they know what it looks like, they know how to behave and they can have their behaviour in that online world modelled for them at school when they access through school systems. I think that is absolutely vital. I think if we did not do that and we had no access at all, I do not know how we would prepare young people for the world that they are living in. That is a really important point, from how to use online banking to how to research properly and how to write an essay which is not plagiarised, for example. Because there is a whole world there that sometimes young people fall foul of simply because they have not used the right approach.

The Connétable of Grouville:

We understand that in schools statutory responsibilities for safeguarding in relation to online safety are set out in the Jersey Schools Review Handbook. How is the statutory responsibility monitored?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It would be monitored via the reviews themselves. There are safeguarding leads in every single school, which would monitor the processes themselves. I think, to be honest, I would say it would be monitored at a department level as well within each department within the school. As an ex-head of department I would want to know about any instance that had happened as part of the general overview of behaviour, overview of the way that things were happening in schools, particularly if we

were using online systems, online teaching and materials, and there are lots of them now, some of them extremely good.

The Connétable of Grouville:
In your opinion, is this monitoring sufficient? We all understand that children spend a great deal of their time outside of school, but do you think this monitoring is sufficient?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
In school?

The Connétable of Grouville:
Yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I think the monitoring in school is probably much, much better than outside of school. Is it perfect? I would suggest no because I do not know if it can be, but is it sufficient ... I mean, that is a really difficult one. I would say yes, but it can always be improved. One feature of good schools and good education is they are self-improving, and you look at where there are issues ... I think this is the one thing around this issue. The reason that we need a really open, clear and constructive debate is that when things go wrong we do not want them hidden. We do not want sensationalist headlines when things go wrong and then schools thinking: "We cannot talk about this." We want to be open. What is not happening here? What does not work? How can we put it right? In terms of systems, Alexa, do you want to add anything to that because you know way more about this than me?

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
The 2 systems that are in place are real time, so it acts as an early detection method to pick up anything immediately. These are logged as alerts. They go directly to the designated safeguarding leads, who then can act immediately as they occur. They are continually reviewed, the software applications, with emerging technologies such as A.I. (artificial intelligence), for example, to then look at that to see whether they are still the best possible filtering systems in place, because they change, of course, over time with those emerging risks.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Can I just ask ... sorry, do you want to go ...?

Interim Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
All I was going to say, just in reference to the Jersey School Review Framework, that is a pivotal part of our review system and safeguarding is a key element of that. So when reviewers go into

schools, they will want to see that the right processes are in place to ensure that they are monitoring all forms of harm for children, including what happens online. So they have to make sure they have the right systems in place and that information is recorded and then acted upon. So that is a key part of the review. So in terms of that part of the monitoring, that is in place through the review systems.

The Connétable of Grouville:
That would have been my next question, so thank you.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Can I just check? So when something comes up and it goes to a safeguarding lead, that will just be what is on the school system. So if there is a child looking at something on their mobile phone and it is not logged into the online school ...

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
No, if a child brings in a phone and it has been agreed they can, so it is a B.Y.O.D. (bring your own device), essentially ...

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Or if it is not, perhaps? I mean if they are just using a phone at school.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
No.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
In lunch or something.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
No, because they will be using data. Of course they would. We are talking about the things that we can control using our wi-fi systems.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Yes, so if they ... so there are the things which you cannot control, that is what I mean. Yes.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Yes, there would be things.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Of course there would be, yes.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
But mobile phones, if they use our school wi-fi, then actually that is also controlled.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Yes, it is just if they are not using the school wi-fi on their phone.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Correct.

Interim Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
However, it is probably just worth adding, though, that if the teachers were notified of someone looking at something that they should not do on their phone at a point in time, there would then be systems in place within the school for that to be reported and actioned upon.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Can I just add that there are, I think, only 2 schools now that allow any access at break time. One is for ... well, I can go through where they are later and I have been through this a number of times now both here and in the Assembly. So the vast majority of schools ... not a single primary school allows access to mobile phones, so that is not an issue in primary schools. In secondary schools, there are only 2 that allow for a short time during break in supervised areas. What schools have done is pushed back the tide bit by bit with the involvement of the young people in the schools and we are getting to a point now I think we are 95 per cent, if not 96 per cent, at a point where mobile phones are not used in schools. You would have noticed that J.C.G. (Jersey College for Girls) has a new policy from 15th May and I think that is a very ... I have to give some credit there, the way that has come about, because they involved the young people, they involved their 6th formers, their student leadership team, and said: "What should we be doing here?" Now they have a policy where 7 and 8 lock their phones away. I think it is 9 and 10 are sight unseen, they must be switched off and put away if they bring them to school. Now, that is something that has been worked with for young people. This is exactly the way we should do it. I would say that when we are talking about this, we must include the young people in the discussions because they are the ones that we need to educate into the long term.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Well, I think we have some more questions on that later.

The Connétable of Grouville:

In your letter to the panel on 10th March you advised that children are taught about e-safety and online harms as part of the Jersey curriculum, for example, in computing and P.S.H.E. (personal, social and health education) in both primary and secondary. You also referenced that some schools have developed a digital literacy programme. Do you think that the current curriculum and delivery is sufficient?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

In a changing world, I would suggest that we have to look at all of the curriculum that we teach because the world has changed so much. I think it is a really good starting point and beyond a starting point, yes, but of course it can be adapted. Because Alexa mentioned A.I. and I think that is going to be an issue that we have to address. I know I certainly need training in A.I. I do not use ChatGPT or whatever it is called, but it is something I will need to train in. I think there is some really good work going on, yes. I do believe there is some good work going on. Can it be better? Can it be shared more? Absolutely. I think hopefully a positive discussion around this review can help us with that. Schools can say: "This is what we are doing." Does anyone want to add some of the things that are going on, for example?

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Yes. Obviously, we launched the digital education strategy in 2023 and one of the particular strands in that is looking at teacher training and the standardisation on that to make sure there is parity across all schools and that everyone, both teachers and students, are at a sufficient level to adequately teach those pupils what the safeguards are that are required to be a digital citizen, an effective digital citizen, and to go into employment. Because ultimately our children are the ones that are going to run the country at some point.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Sure. One of our primary concerns, Minister, is obviously you just mentioned the year 2023. So much has changed in that area.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Absolutely.

The Connétable of Grouville:

It is consistency. We are concerned about keeping up to date in this area. Do you think that is consistent?

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Yes, because it is evolving and continually adapting.

The Connétable of Grouville:
All the time, yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
One of the projects in primary schools is education for a connected world and it covers areas of self-image, identity, online relationships, online reputation, online bullying, managing online information, health, well-being and lifestyle, privacy and security, copyright and ownership. That starts in year 6 and early on there is an introduction to young people about this is what the online world looks like. We have to be consistent with that. I think there are many adults who might benefit from the course, to be quite frank, and I do not mean that in a patronising way. I would do it myself.

The Connétable of Grouville:
Not at all, not at all.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes, you are absolutely right. In a changing world we have an arm's race, do we not, in terms of the internet itself and how we deal with that in schools, but we are trying to take that on.

The Connétable of Grouville:
What advice is available currently to ensure that there is an age-appropriate approach to educating young people about online harms?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I think that goes with the courses themselves that are designed. Because a curriculum is designed specifically for that. You design the curriculum to be appropriate for the children you are teaching. So, for example, the P.H.S.E. curriculum would be through key stages and design format. But it is a difficult area because perhaps at a younger age you are going to need to talk about some really challenging issues. I do not think we should shy away from those issues and I think the skills of the teaching profession and those who are involved we rely on so much in so many other areas, all sorts of social areas, from personal health and so on. It is a challenge. It has to be age appropriate, but within that there will be some challenges.

Interim Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Just on that, just in terms of, for example, applications that are used in schools, there are risk assessments that will have to be done in terms of their use and then that will obviously look at the age appropriateness of those applications to be used with different age groups.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Okay. Thank you.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Can I just ask a question about that? So is there something done differently for children with additional needs? Because you talk about age appropriate ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, good question.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

... for children with additional needs, age is just a number.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, absolutely.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

What concerns me is quite often ... we see it sometimes with sex education, for example. Children, because they are that age, are kind of sheep dipped. Could you just talk to us about perhaps different strategies that you are taking as Education to deal with the harms around children with additional needs?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. There is a key concept in education, differentiation, differentiating work and content for the needs of the child that you are teaching in front of you. It is very, very difficult to do precisely, but that is exactly the type of thing that would need to be done. In our schools, in our special schools, in our A.R.C.s (additional resource centre), to some extent that will be easier because there is such a personalised knowledge of each individual.

[10:15]

If a child has a record of need, teachers will know that and there will be provision in place. There is a register of S.E.N. (special educational needs), which will be identified on ... what is the online register called where they register ...? I used it for 20 years and I have forgotten the name. S.I.M.S. (school information management system), sorry, which would flag that up, because I think that has improved. So there are ways, but you are absolutely right. It is also one of the biggest challenges because we also need to give access to every child to the difficult conversations. That might be more difficult with some children but also they may be more at risk and we have to take that really

seriously. But I think the recognition ... this is another area around the provision around S.E.N. which I have talked about a lot recently and how we need to make sure that we are adequately providing ... and I absolutely agree with you. I think it is an ongoing challenge, absolutely.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I just wanted to add something to that which was ... there was a recent case which has been in the public domain where some ... I think it was more than one. A girl believed that the person contacting her was a 16-year-old boy because this is what he said. It turned out to be a much older man. She agreed to meet up with him, partly I think because she was on the autistic spectrum and she was probably trying to be more trusting. Then he sexually assaulted her. So it is really important that children, all sorts of children, are fully aware of what is happening online.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Absolutely, yes. I would absolutely agree with that. When I say that ... I think sometimes the discussion, I am going to call it, around online harms becomes polarised. We do not want it to be polarised. We absolutely accept that. We would accept that every young person and adult needs to know what safe online means and the risks that they face. That young person was not to blame. The person to blame was the person who was the groomer, and I hope they were ... there is law to deal with that and I hope they were caught and put away.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes.

The Connétable of Grouville:

My next question, Minister, is about the online safety lead in a school. Can you describe how the designated online safety lead in a school ensures that children are educated about online safety and related issues?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think the online safety lead is, I would suggest, more about the control and the recognition of online safety issues. I would not say they are necessarily the person responsible for how online safety is taught because that would be part of curriculum planning. But they would certainly have an overview of it. I would say that any curriculum that is planned has to be done with a number of professionals involved. It cannot be left to one person. I think this is a really important point. You have just got me thinking of something. It is a really important role, the online safety lead, but it is also an important role for every single planner of a curriculum and every teacher to recognise there is those issues. Then if they are not sure, they have somebody to go to, a clearly designated person to go to: "I want to use this website. I think it is really good. What issues am I going to face here?" The

online safety lead could say: "There is stuff there that may not be age appropriate. Do not use it." Fine. Absolutely, fine. That is the type of dialogue that we need to have. Teachers in their day to day planning, and they plan, would take account of that as well. It does not mean you are not going to make mistakes, and I think we have to be less harsh on the mistakes and more supportive of why did it happen and how can we change it.

The Connétable of Grouville:

The next question is: what oversight would there be on the online safety lead's role and responsibilities?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, that will be part of line management from the senior management team in the school, of course. That is their role.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Safeguarding audits.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Safeguarding audits. Do you want to talk just briefly about safeguarding audits? I have missed things. Go on.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

There are annual safeguarding audits across all schools that are designed to help improve safeguarding in schools. It is used as a self-evaluation tool for schools to look at all areas of safeguarding, but there is a significant area within that that relates to online harm and digital safety. So the department work with the schools annually to make sure that everything they have is robust and in place.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Okay. Thank you. One final question, a supplementary, if I may. You have mentioned year 6 twice in the questions already. Do you feel that that is going to have to go to a younger set of children?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It already happens at a younger age. I think we start in year 3 very gently.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Absolutely, yes, so within the curriculum.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I only mention that because it was a specific ...

The Connétable of Grouville:
Yes, a specific cut-off.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
From year 3. I may have mentioned this to you before in a hearing. We went to speak to young people, year 9s, in one of our schools. We have been to all schools and we always talk to young people about this. When we mentioned online safety, one of them did look at us and go: "Oh." I say: "Would you mind telling me why I got that reaction?" "Listen, we have had this since year 3, 4, 5, 6. I probably know more about it than you do." I say: "Okay, that is a fair enough point." Now, that does not mean it is perfect. It does not mean that things are all going in for every child. The children are aware of it and I think we have to work with young people and give them some ownership of their own safety as well: "This is really serious for you. You have a responsibility in this." I think our young people do respond to that type of responsibility.

The Connétable of Grouville:
I am glad that we have aired that in public, Minister. I think it is important.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes, thank you. Thank you for the question.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
I have some questions around online safety policy. Can you tell us whether internal school technical monitoring is a legal requirement in Jersey?

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
No, it is not a legal requirement but it is still followed.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Okay. So we asked about internal school technical monitoring in a written correspondence with you. The reply came back and said under the Keeping Children Safe in Education Law 2022 schools as corporate parents are responsible for keeping children safe online. But we do not have a keeping children in Jersey safe in education law, do we?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
No.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is it articled then in the children's law or the young people's law?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

This is the issue. Do you want to ...? I have an answer, but you give the correct bit and then I will give mine. **[Laughter]**

Assistant Director of Policy, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

I will say it and you will correct me.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

No, I think it is going to be the other way round because you have explained this to me about 7 times, but go on.

Assistant Director of Policy, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

I can clarify that. So under the Children and Young People Law 2022 there are duties and articles in there which require Ministers and also Chief Officers to bring forward arrangements for safeguarding children. That in Jersey is the key kind of legislative lever, if you like, that holds those people accountable for safeguarding children. The law is blind to whether that is online or ... I do not have another ... or in real life. They are both real life but online as well. It does not distinguish. It is in its entirety. So that is the key point. Of course, the same law also talks about corporate parenting and there are duties that reflect from that. But I think if I was going to point to the major, significant piece of legislation it would be that and it would be the safeguarding element. So building out from that, an example, you have your D.S.L.s (designated safeguarding leads) in schools. They would then also be talking, as you will be aware, to other parts of government and other practitioners, talking about quality assurance in terms of safeguarding and what have you. So that is how the system works.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So we have a robust legislative framework that is fairly recent, 2022?

Assistant Director of Policy, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Correct, yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

That provides you with what you need in order to be able to achieve that?

Assistant Director of Policy, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Correct. That is the Jersey-ism, if you like.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Yes. Thank you. Your current online safety policy, though, was published in August 2021, 4 years ago now. What work is going on to ...?

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
It is currently under review.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
It is currently under review for exactly the reason that I think all of us around the table would think. It is a long time in this environment and, to be quite frank, I think we need to have a process where it is not a constant review but I think there is a constant undertaking of update. It is like a live document. It is like a risk assessment. A lot of people do not understand that risk assessments are not documents that go on the shelf, they are live documents, the assessment of risk at that time and how that changes. I think that is effectively what we have with that online safety policy. It is a risk assessment which will change with time as the risks change, because they do change. I cannot remember how long ago that TikTok was ... it was not that long ago that TikTok became abundant, if that is the right word. That was not many years ago. Things change.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Thank you. So do you follow the U.K. (United Kingdom) statutory guidance, the keeping children safe in education guidance?

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Yes, we do, but we also have our own Jersey keeping children safe in education and U.K. legislation supports.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Supports what you do?

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
It is written in the Jersey one, yes, absolutely.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Thank you. So the formal guidance then related to supporting the online safety, if Jersey wanted to, could we depart significantly from the U.K.'s framework?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I believe the answer would be yes. I think anything we do, though, has to be the right thing and if there is something that is good I think we can build on that. We have a unique position in Jersey over many things where we can build on what is there and do our own thing. So I believe the answer is yes, we can, and to some extent, yes, we do already, I would suggest, because it is a Jersey-linked policy that we use. The simple answer is yes. There is a straight answer.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So I guess this probably will fall to you, Alexa, but reviewing formal guidance and doing a gap analysis in Jersey, my question was going to be: is there somebody in C.Y.P.E.S. who is responsible for doing that? I guess that person is you ...

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Yes, that is correct.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

... maintaining an overview of what is going on?

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Do you also look more further afield than the U.K.?

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So we know that, for example, France have banned mobile phones recently.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I would just stop you there because they did a trial. They did a trial. Again, could I just stop and make a point here? Sorry to interrupt. I think sometimes we have a world of absolutes around this topic and we need to look a little below the surface. They did a trial. They are looking at whether they will introduce that wider scheme, and one of the issues for the French Government was it is going to cost them about €700,000 to put the things into schools that they want to do and they are not entirely sure it is the right way to go about it. So they have done a trial and that is a really

interesting thing for us to watch. But I think when things are reported as they are banned, like in Australia, you have to look below the surface there of what that means. I think sometimes that world of absolutes does not help the intelligent discussion that we need to have because it is not quite what people think it is. Sorry, I did not want to interrupt but I just have to make that point.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

No, I am actually pleased with the interruption because the broader question was: are we looking globally as opposed to just kind of blindly following ... not blindly following, I do not mean that, but just following U.K. guidance. I think the answer that you have given just demonstrates that there has been some thought gone into ...

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think there is an enormous amount of thought going into this. It is, I think, increasingly proactive, is the way I would say it. We met as a group. There was Ministers, myself, Economy Department, Home Affairs, the Minister for Children and Families, to talk around this topic, and we will be doing that regularly to see where we are. Because this is not just cross-government, it is across our society, which I am sure we will come to at some point.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

We are really pleased, since our hearing in October last year, to see so much is now happening.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

It is interesting as well because with the J.C.G. policy, although they are not calling it a ban, effectively for year 7s and 8s there is an absence of mobile phone use, which is quite clear. So, I guess that demonstrates an adaptation of a policy that works for a particular school.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. Do you know, I was just saying that is a really important point, I think, because I think with young people and where we are, just saying that is banned has never worked throughout our history. Now, smoking is banned, and I will controversially say some children smoke and they vape. We know that. It is not about banning, it is about working with children to say: "This is not the right thing for you. Join with us. We have a way to do this now and let us make it better."

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I think, from our perspective, that is comforting to hear that that approach is taking place in Jersey. Thank you. We asked in writing to confirm the numbers of online safety incidents that have been recorded in schools in 5 years, but you confirmed from a departmental perspective that you do not have a central record, because it is individual schools that are the data controllers.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Is that a problem to you, that you have not got an overall view?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I would not say it is a problem. It might be something ... I think perhaps it is something we do need to look at.

Interim Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
I think it is something we need to look at. Probably my colleagues will be thinking: "How do we do that?" There are complexities around that, but when you actually ask the question: "Is that something we would like to know centrally just to get an understanding of the challenge?", of course, I think is the answer.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Yes. So what role ...

[10.30]

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I would make a plea, though, if we are going to do that, that we just do not simply have F.O.I.s (freedom of information) that spread across the newspapers with no context whatsoever about what is going on, because it does not help the discussion.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
So what oversight does C.Y.P.E.S. have then about individual incidents in schools? Would they have to be pretty severe before they are reported up to the department?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
No. They are recorded. They will be recorded as incidents on S.I.M.S., for example. Most of the incidents ...

Deputy H.M. Miles:
How do you get to know about them, though?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

There would be the serious incidents that we would get to know about. Most of the instances, for example, that are flagged up, as somebody who taught biology and tried to do that online, if you teach anything about human reproduction online it flags up an enormous number of words. At the end of one lesson there were I think it was 77 incidents that had been flagged to the safeguarding lead, who came to see me and said: "What on earth have you been doing today?" So, those anomalies will happen. Now, those are not serious incidents, they are just things that have happened in the due course of teaching. So, the vast majority, I think, will be like that. The serious incidents where someone tried to access something that is very, very harmful will be taken incredibly seriously. There are processes in the schools, there are rules within the schools, there are behaviour policies within the schools, and I would assume that senior management would be involved and parents would be communicated with, because it is a safeguarding issue as well. Sorry, just to say, if a child accesses something like that, that is a safeguarding issue for that child. Why are you doing that? It may well lead to larger problems, which will be uncovered.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So you are confident that you would get the feedback from head teachers about safeguarding incidents that were so serious?

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

The number of incidents are recorded in schools. So as part of the safeguarding audit, the number of incidents are looked at along with themes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

So may I make a point there, please. It is really important for me. This is exactly what we have done with incidents of violence in schools, report everything, because we want to know. We want to be absolutely transparent. So I would make a plea to the media to please report that in context, and it is the same with this. I do not want any head teacher feeling: "I cannot report these things because it will be all over the press." That is the issue that we have. There is not a single teacher or head teacher, I believe, that does not want to protect children and safeguard them in this way. So we want that to be really open and be absolutely honest: "This has happened." It is not about criticism, it is about recognition, and then let us deal with the safeguarding issue.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Absolutely.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

In the online safety policy, schools are required to maintain accurate records and a log of online safety incidents. Is there an agreed definition of an online safety incident?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
That is a really good question.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
That is a really good question. It is not in the current policy, as you are aware. It is in the new policy.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Okay. Have you got a timescale for the new policy?

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
So it is very near complete draft version.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Okay.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
So imminently it is. It is really near complete.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
We would be happy to share a draft with the panel. It is an open document.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
That would be good, yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
We want to get it right as well. That is really difficult to define as well. I mean, it is a difficult one.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I would rather err on the side of caution and have too many safeguarding incidents reported than not enough. I think that is not a problem.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

So with the monitoring of the online safety policy, it says that: “C.Y.P.ES. distributes daily reports to state schools about the suspicious search queries made on Google the previous day.” Is that process still undertaken, or has ChatGPT and everything else superseded that?

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
No. It has not superseded it, but because now the systems are real-time alert flags, so anything that occurs, whether it is in a chatbot or wherever it is, will then automatically flag to the designated safeguarding lead. So the process has changed slightly because it is not a manual process now, it is a more automated process.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I think it is an improvement.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Can you give us an example of what a suspicious search record might be within ... bear in mind we are talking about it in public, but just a general one?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes. I think if you search for violence, suicide ...

Interim Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
It could be a sexualised term. There could be a kind of ... something that is associated with violence or a weapon or something like that, and it can happen at all ages.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Any reference to suicide, for example, would be flagged.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Okay. So that flags up to the department. That then goes ...

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
There are levels of flags as well. So if something that might be in the curriculum, but also might be a bit ambiguous, it might be a low-level flag, whereas suicide would be a high-level flag. Those are continually reviewed.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
So the department would then flag that with the online safety lead for the particular school?

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
How does the online safety lead know who entered that particular search term in a school of hundreds of people?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Because they would log on, with their log-on to the time ... it would be time and dated, and you would know who logged on at that time. It would be linked to the log-on.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
The filtering software tells you.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Okay. So the filtering software does go down to that granular detail?

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Yes, it does.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Okay.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
So that student, Helen Miles, has been logging on again, and she is searching for who knows what, and you would be flagged.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Correct. It also takes a screenshot of whatever it was that you were doing as well.

The Connétable of Grouville:
All right, okay. If in doubt, ask Alexa.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
I was just going to say, do you think there could be any about this? **[Laughter]**

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I was waiting for you. I was waiting.

The Connétable of Grouville:
You were waiting?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
We are 35 minutes in, that is not bad.

The Connétable of Grouville:
You knew I was going to say it.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Can I also ask - it is just my final question in this section - obviously you have highlighted that the reporting is granular. It sounds very, very good. Data capture is good around that. How do those concerns get shared with parents and other members in the school? Is that using standard safeguarding procedures?

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
It is in a variety of ways actually.

Interim Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
I think that is where obviously the school know about this. They will be notifying parents based on how they do that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Okay.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
But I think as well ... I understand what you mean by standard safeguarding procedures, but I think it is a real contradiction because there are standard safeguarding procedures, but I do not think any safeguarding incident is standard because they are all specific to the situation at the time. This is where ... how pupils are known by their tutors, by their teachers, by the management team. Perhaps they have had support in school. So if it is a particular child and you have flagged this up, go to the form teacher and say: "Okay, yes, that has been a concern for me. I am really concerned. I want to raise this now." It is a real good measure of that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Okay. Thank you. Just my final question: what sort of volume are we talking about? How many suspicious search queries do you get per day?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Do you mean like high-level ones?

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I do not know. We can find out.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Yes, we can. I can give you a specific number. I would not know off the top of my head.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
But are we talking hundreds?

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
No, we are not. It is minimal.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Tens?

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Tens. All right.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes. The most difficult lesson to teach online is P.S.H.E., because you have to deal with all these topics. Just do not do it online, is my advice. Because the safeguarding lead will just not talk to you for 2 days. Quite rightly, but anyway.

Assistant Director of Policy, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Can I just make a final point, is that the school is part of a wider network of safeguarding. So in those examples of where there is seriousness and the context - there might be a child who is looked after - there are clear escalation procedures up into certifying partnership, which that information then can be shared, and to see if there is any meaningful correlation with anything else going on in

that child. So while we are talking very specifically about a school and maybe a classroom, the school operates in a wider context.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes, okay. Thank you very much.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Just one final thing on this, can I say? If the systems we use are not perfect and we find that we want to improve them, we do not want to hide anything. So if things come to people, then let us know, because this is a very changing world and it is an arms race, and we can only do this well if we are open about what is going on. I am quite happy to take the critique in its truest sense of anything that we do so that we can improve it. We are not going to hide anything. I think that is a very important point to make, just to say. Thank you.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Okay. Thank you. The next topic relates somewhat to what you have just said. A number of parents and individuals have got in touch with this panel as part of this review with concerns about children's access to mobile phones at school, and also the content access through mobile devices while at school. What is your opinion about whether students' use of personal mobile devices in schools is a problem or not?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, there are 2 points to this. There are 2 areas of this. One is that currently - and I think we have been through the figures so many times about schools - there are 2 of the secondary schools who use scheduled break times and lunch times only; 2 of the secondary schools, both 12 and 13 students, they are 16, 17, 18 years old.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Can you say which schools those are?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is Grainville and Hautlieu. J.C.G. has just implemented a "no phones seen" policy. All of the other schools do not allow mobile phones to be used in school at all. That is the important point to make. Now, how they manage that is up to the school. It is a no seeing policy. In terms of access to online content, yes, I would be extremely concerned about young people accessing online content in an unfiltered, unprotected way. When they leave the school premises, it is very difficult to schools to manage that. It is impossible for them to do that.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Absolutely.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

If children have data, they can access. So that is the issue. I have read through all the submissions, and I would absolutely share the concerns in there. Now, if that is happening in our schools with policies that are in place, the thing to do is inform head teachers, inform teachers, talk to the school, talk about why that is, because that has to be addressed. It is a safeguarding issue. It is not just a safeguarding issue for the children that have been exposed by something, but the person who might be trying to expose children to that. That is equally as big a safeguarding issue, and we need to be dealing with that. I have to say I think our schools need a bit of credit in what they have done over the last 3 years, because they have tried to turn back the tide of the mobile phone use, and school after school, by working with their staff and their students, come up with a policy, which is to say we will not have phones in schools and we will change the culture. So tomorrow I could say I am going to announce a ban, and it would be 96 per cent complete. It would be a lovely headline, lovely thing to do. Meaningless. The reason that is meaningless is because it does not solve the problem. What will solve problems or address problems is exactly the process that schools are taking, is to say: "We are going to work with our children, with our parents, and we are going to work as a school as to what we want to do."

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

I think we have some questions on this a bit later.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. So, I share those concerns that are online. Yes, sorry.

The Connétable of Grouville:

We have spoken about wi-fi within the schools, et cetera, but the next question is about mobile data. Has C.Y.P.E.S. considered the potential risk of online harms to students from their access to mobile data through their devices?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. We cannot control access through mobile data. We simply cannot switch that off. But the policies of not having phones being used means you do not have access during that time. If those policies are not followed, or children ... do you know, children do not always do what you want them to. It is a remarkable concept. But they do not, and we recognise that. So that needs to be managed by schools. Locking phones away in ... there are all sorts of ways to do that. I will mention something. The record I have heard of is a young person with 3 phones: one that the person handed

into school, one the person gave to their parents, who said: “I am having your mobile phone”, and one was the mobile phone they were using. Now, nothing is ever going to be perfect, but what that young person needs to be is to be educated in what they are doing here. Because that is not the right thing to do, and why are you doing that, and what has gone wrong in that relationship with that child being safe online? We need to address those relationships more than anything else.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Can you tell us about any challenges of including mobile phones and mobile devices in the C.Y.P.E.S. online safety policy?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, it is a challenge, because schools have never bought a child a mobile phone, I believe. I do not think we have ever had a child bought a mobile phone, and, also, we cannot tell parents how to parent, and we do not want the blame game. It is not about blaming parents, it is not about blaming schools, it is about that relationship together to say: “Look, these are real online harms that we need to be extremely careful for our young people. How are we going to do this?” We need the schools’ policies to be supported by everybody. So when a school says: “We will not have mobile phones”, then the children either do not bring them, but many parents might say: “They are getting the bus home, they are walking home. I want them to be able to contact me.” I think a lot of the phones that are given are old phones that parents had previously and say: “I am going to buy a new phone. You can have my old smartphone.” I do not know what, probably you can guess the percentage, but I would suggest a very high percentage of phones are done that way.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

So, yes, there is a challenge there, a real challenge, but we are at a point where we are very close. I think that we will have effectively a phone-free jurisdiction within our schools as best we possibly can. That will raise the issue as how do we educate young people in the safety on those devices, because we need to do both. These are the contradictions we have. We are living in a world of certain contradictions and absolutes, and we need to work around those things.

[10:45]

The Connétable of Grouville:

Minister, where should the responsibility for access to mobile devices sit when a student is in school?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, in school, teachers are *in loco parentis*, so they take on the role as parent. So, therefore, the schools are responsible for monitoring mobile phone use, I am sure. But when there is a clear policy in place, often of which parents have signed up for, then, yes, they can only try and implement that policy. If parents choose to, I do not know, text their children at school or whatever, it does not help the situation. I am not saying that is the case, but I think the policies that have been developed of not seen, putting in lockers and so on, is a very good idea. They are away from the child at the time. I think we need to be building on those. I have no idea how a law would work. That would be the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs would have to come up with some sort of law to say no child under 16 is even allowed a phone. I do not want to see our children criminalised. I do not know how that would work. I simply do not know how that would work, but that is a perhaps a wider discussion that needs to be had.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Obviously, we have discussed devices, but what about the content, the responsibility for that?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, it is interesting. I was watching something about the social media companies who talk about they have robust age verification in place, and that is the way they have got around the law in the U.K. They say: "We have robust age verification processes in place." I am sorry, forgive me for being cynical, but I do not think there is such a thing as a robust age verification process in that way. So social media content is ... we have given access to the entire sum total of human knowledge to everybody with a phone in their pocket, good, bad or indifferent. How we control that is a societal discussion that we need to have. Schools can play one role in that.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes. We have some more questions on government strategy. Also, just to say, we are not yet halfway through the questions, so if we can keep the answers concise.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Sorry, I am trying to give as much information as I can. Yes.

The Connétable of Grouville:

What is the response to parents who might say: "I need more help to protect my child from accessing certain content on the internet"?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I would say: “Go and speak to the school. Go and speak to teachers. Come and talk to us. What can we put on to help with that? What information can we give you?” Alexa, I know you do courses in schools ...

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
... to do exactly that. I think that is an area we need to work on. But that would be a fantastic dialogue to have, because as soon as we are involved with parents in school educating in that way, that relationship develops and it becomes easier for everybody involved around that issue. I would absolutely encourage that.

The Connétable of Grouville:
Okay. We were grateful for your assistance in collating copies of different policies from government schools relating to the use of mobile phones, and we noted that there was a range of rules and requirements within these policies, and some of these, not all, referred to other digital devices. Could you provide your insight into whether the current approaches are appropriately structured, and if or more centralised policy or guidance would help ensure consistency across schools?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Do you mean in terms of mobile phones and smart watches and so on?

The Connétable of Grouville:
Yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes. Well, it is interesting because there are some policies that are wide. In exam rooms, for example, you are not allowed to take a smart watch or a phone.

The Connétable of Grouville:
No.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
They are all handed in. In terms of schools, schools have developed policies which are very similar now. So I do not think it is a big step to have a central policy, but I think we are at a stage now where we could talk to schools collectively and come up with something that will, most importantly, be effective across all schools, because they have all bought into it, and they all know what they are

doing. Because sometimes, and this is not a criticism of you guys, but I would say there are central policies that are imposed and some schools will say: "We do not know what to do with this policy." This is something that has been an iterative process over the last 2 to 3 years, and we are in a much better position than we have ever been. So it will not be very difficult to put a central policy in place because it is virtually there. So, yes, that is something we can consider. Can I just say, though, and I am sorry to go on again, we must not, therefore, though, think: "We have a central policy in place, that is that dealt with."

The Connétable of Grouville:
That is that, yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Because it is not. We know that, and we are all quite aware of that.

Interim Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
We will need to continue to work with school leaders to see about the current application of policies in schools: is that being successful or do we need to take another step?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes. Absolutely.

The Connétable of Grouville:
There were some additional ones that I think you have dealt with. Do you think that smart watches and other devices need to be covered by the mobile device policy in schools?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
This is where my knowledge of things go astray.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
So in terms of "bring your own device", so further device, there is very limited bring your own device in schools. Schools are encouraged to support learning devices, so individual learning devices which have the appropriate safeguards on those devices, whether that is in the school environment or a home environment. So that would be covered under the central e-safety policy, and not a requirement for mobile devices where, as in mobile phones, there might be access to 4G, for example.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Because we did hear from one school, a very little primary school child who came in wearing a smart watch, who accidentally kept calling 999 and the police turned up.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes. The police kept turning up.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I am surprised that a primary school child has a smart watch. They are quite expensive as well, are they not?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Well, maybe it was not the best type. But, yes, we did hear about that.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. Again, this is this point about everything is moving on so fast, you know, smart watches are available. This is allegedly a smart watch, and I am sure I use about 1 per cent of its functions. Things are moving so quickly, yes, and this is why I think the policies that we have need to be more like risk assessments, which are ongoing, so we address them as they come and we can be as proactive as we possibly can. Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I mean, the issue of smart watches, it is all right saying: "Well, my phone is in the locker", but if the phone links into the smart watch, so if the policy does not cover the smart watch, how does that work?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. Absolutely.

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

Well, I think that is just a very good point and it is the learning that we have to have.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Because I know the J.C.G. policy is that your phone must be in your locker and it must be switched off, but is there a member of staff checking that it is switched off? It is very difficult just to manage the practicalities of it, is it not?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Well, yes, but that is a very key point. How would schools do this? We are talking about 800 children in schools every morning. It is okay to say: "Put them in lockers and switch them off." You could check that every morning if you wanted to. You are going to take 40 minutes out of the curriculum. So we have to have a point ... this is why it is so important that we work on these policies with the young people involved: "There is a reason for us doing this. We have agreed you are going to do this. We will do it." It is like uniform. Children wear uniform because we have agreed it, and it is going to work. It is not always perfect, but we get there. It is like the culture of a school with them buying into it. I think that is the line we need to take. That is why I am saying that I really hope that the dialogue around this can be less ... not divisive. What was the word I used? I cannot remember. But, anyway, more constructive and more together, rather than being separated.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes. A lot of the questions that are supplementary on here, Minister, I think we have already dealt with, bring your own devices, monitoring, filtering through wi-fi, so I am going to pass on to the Chair.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Thanks. So I have some questions now around government strategy, and we have talked about all the things that the schools are doing. So how does the Government ensure that schools have the necessary tools and training to monitor and address online risk so that they have the resources there?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. I think this is another area in our schools where we need to put more support in. I think that does not mean nothing is happening. An enormous amount is happening, but it is a very changing world. Teacher training now includes a very specific level of training on use of online, the J.G.T.T.P. (Jersey Graduate Teacher Training Programme), for example, and I am certain that P.G.C.E. (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) in the U.K. would do that as well. I have a whole list of things here. Perhaps we could send them to you. There are 8. So new revenue funding to address technology will be needed. One of the issues is the digital divide. We can control devices that the school provide. The safeguarding of software and so on is improving, we believe. Yes, it is an arms race, but we can keep up with that arms race. But some schools have much more access than others, which means that perhaps in some schools that is why we are having more mobile phone use, if it is going to be used. During COVID, this was recognised massively, and many young people were provided with devices because it was the only way to access education.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes. Absolutely.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We are now at a point where in schools, if we can ensure that all children have access in a similar way, which is controlled carefully, I think there is an opportunity there to train and educate in a way of online safety and so on across the piece in that safe environment because of the controls that are put in place with devices in schools.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. So if I can ask something more specifically about budget then. So the panel understands that schools do not have a designated online safety budget. Could you confirm how much of the C.Y.P.E.S. central training budget has been used for online safety training?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Do you want to answer this, Keith, while I search for the page?

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

We spent approximately £6,000 to support training in schools. Those schools themselves put a lot of training on themselves.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

So £6,000 in total?

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

That is what the central department provided. But as I said, the schools do a lot of training themselves.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Remember there will be people who are specialists in schools, often the I.T. (information technology) teachers, often the I.T. specialists who are there, and other staff who have real good knowledge. I had a member of staff who had excellent knowledge of Google Classroom, for example, and trained the entire department. They do tend to become the person everyone goes to, so they regret it very quickly. But we all know someone like that. But also with that central training, we want to recognise where more training is needed and target that.

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

I think it is quite important that a lot of our work, and I think we have been probably good at this at different points, and we need to be more consistent, but it is about the staff across the system in schools who are really good at stuff sharing with staff in other schools, and it is creating those networks as the way of upskilling. It is not just simply an external amount of money, it is about enabling staff to learn from each other. Schools do that brilliantly themselves, and we need to encourage that more centrally.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Okay. That is good. Sticking to the funding, how much external sponsorship funding has been provided for online safety training? Because I think this was referred to in the letter that we had from you, so we were just wondering about this.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I do not have a figure in my head.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Yes. It says: "Additional funding has been provided directly by external sponsorship."

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
We will have to find that figure for you. Our apologies for that. I do not have that figure in my head.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
If you just write to us with more info on that? Yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes. Absolutely.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Okay. Then, also, the schools themselves, how much of their own budget are they having to put towards this as a general idea?

Interim Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Devolved £400,000 to schools.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes. £400,000 is devolved across schools to support this. But I think some of the support as well, as we say, is because it is a process that is ongoing. I can remember what we would have is if I was wanting to teach something in a particular way using I.T. and I was not certain, then another

colleague who was would come in and support you at the time, and said: “I will come and help you with that. We can sort this out.” It is about gaining that confidence as you grow. It is not simple to pinpoint that amount, where the money is spent. Also, I would say I do not know if it is the best way to spend money to have one training session at the end of a day or during an inset day and say: “There you go, there is your online Highland stuff done and there is your I.T. done for the next few years and box ticked.” I personally do not think that works brilliantly. Can there be some things that work really well? Of course there can. However, I think it needs to be put on but we do need to look at the way in which that funding is used.

Interim Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Also, Chair, just a bit of clarification on it, that is money that is devolved to schools to spend on devices or how they see fit in schools. It is also digital services run the network and to upgrade to do with the wi-fi and all the access points and how the system is run. That is separate funding, it is not …

Assistant Director of Policy, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
I think also to add to Keith, yes, and the school funding formula allows - and this is your point earlier, Deputy Miles, about children with additional needs - that school funding formula then goes directly to that school, depending on the needs of that child. There may well be digital devices, specific technologies that are used, and that is not held centrally, that is out of the school and how that school spends it for that child, which is quite bespoke in that sense. In line with what the Minister was saying, it is difficult to have a figure but I think it is important just to say that out loud.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Okay. Just to clarify then, that £400,000, that is not just used for the training and so on, yes.

Interim Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
No, that is for devices.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Yes, yes, okay, the devices, right.

Interim Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
There have been other points where the department has funded devices, too. It does not give quite an accurate picture of how much has been spent over the years but that is the annual amount that gets put into school budgets.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. But you are saying that you think this needs looking at a bit more.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
What I would say is that whenever we train in something that is so changing, we have got to be open to saying we need to review it all of the time. I think there is a role for those specialists within schools and sharing good practice as well. It is called professionalism and professionals want to improve their practice and we will do everything we can to try and support that.

[11:00]

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Okay. I know you mentioned briefly that there are some schools where there is a lot more digital stuff going on. Does digital inequality affect young people in Jersey and how does it influence their access to tools and resources for online safety education?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I am not suggesting that there is digital inequalities. It seems there are other inequalities in Jersey. How would it affect? We are trying to prepare young people for a world they are going to go into, which is very much a digital world. The more access that is got in a controlled way that is safe, the more teaching can go on and the more able young people are to access that world. I think, yes, there is still more work to be done. I do not want to mention COVID again but I can remember with COVID some young people accessing their work through a phone because that is the only digital device they had. I understand all the debates around that but that was a really unique time that I think we learned a lot from and I think we need to continue that learning.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Okay. I am just going to skip a couple of questions we can send you in writing later. We had a very good submission, a very interesting submission on public health, Minister. How do the department and schools consider public health advice related to potential harms resulting from general screen use? Because there have been links to obesity, myopia, sleep disruption, poor posture, mental health concerns.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes. I think within the school day that is something that is a lot easier to monitor and control. Within a school day children and young people - we are not talking mainly secondary schools, we are talking primary as well - throughout our schools there is a variety of activities that go on during the day, a variety of lessons; there might be subjects and lessons. I think the wider issue of what happens at home is something that I think a public awareness campaign is a useful thing to do. We

would certainly support that. The stereotypical teenager sat in their bedroom playing online games is something that we need to address and that advice needs to be given. It is, again, how can we support parents with that?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay. Something that is in the control of the school is the amount of time students spend on screens in school and if any homework is set and completed on the screen.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. Yes, I think that is something that we need to look at really carefully in terms of particularly about homework. I think what has happened is schools have … and it is mainly secondary schools, I think, where this is something that has come up. I think where it comes from - and I may be wrong here and I am quite happy to be corrected - is you have it for separate subjects. Within a subject you think I have this fantastic online thing I can use, it is really good, it has got everything we want, we will use it, then another subject does the same and other subjects. Before you know it you have an awful lot of stuff that is online. I think there needs to be more co-ordination of that and thinking about that. Do young people have access at home with their homework? Why are they doing their homework online at home? I have done it myself in the past. I had an entire G.C.S.E (General Certificate of Secondary Education) psychology course online; it was fantastic, I thought it was great. But the interaction, I think it is not the only way to do it. Within any delivery of a curriculum you have to have a variety of means and it will shift one way or the other. Yes, that is something that is very interesting for us to look at.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Can I just add that schools often where they set homework online, that is partly because they are trying to equip children with the correct skillset for online exams which are coming and it is really important that children be able to take those exams online efficiently.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, I understand that. I am just thinking if it is day after day of screens for many hours, is there any scientific assessment undertaken or has not been so far about the potential harms and benefits of using educational technology in schools?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

In Jersey there is a scientific assessment going on?

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I think we can only use studies from elsewhere. But, yes, that would be very interesting to see and I think it is a question for us in a wider society.

Interim Chief Officer, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
I think this is a question about it, is it not, it is about recognising the challenge of screen time. As Alexa says, equipping young people with the right skills and at the right appropriate age that this happens. I think we need to understand a bit more about that.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I think I do have to flag up - and it is something I am sure we will look at in the future, all of us - is that Alexa raised a very good point about online exams and we were discussing this previously. They are coming and they are real and how do we equip our young people for that? The reason they are coming is it is a lot easier and quicker to mark and a lot cheaper, to be quite frank.

The Connétable of Grouville:
There is no forests being cut down every year for the Oxbridge exam system, yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
All exams are marked online, by the way, because they are scanned. I have done it myself. I worked for an exam board and marked chemistry papers and I never had papers delivered; they were all online and used to access.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
That is correct, yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Okay. I think that is mine, it is Helen now.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
I have just got some questions around the impact of online harms and the support that is available. What support and protection is there for children who are experiencing cyberbullying?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes. Schools have bullying policies but it is not just about policy. It is about schools being aware that when a child is not in a good place and the support is there. Generally there is support within schools around all areas of bullying and I think that is really important. The key is that cyberbullying

is something that is new, I suppose not new anymore, different from face-to-face issues that someone has been horrible to me today, he said this to me, she said this to me. The teachers have been dealing with that for years, for many, many years. I think it is 2 things, one is about having an openness so that young people can report it, so that we can see it happening and, secondly, then the follow up to that within the school as well. But that is when, I think, families and parents need to be involved as well, plus it happens in our system and we can monitor it and that is a lot easier. But I read some of the things and I would really want people to contact schools, talk to safeguarding and let us deal with those issues as they arrive. Let us be really on the ball about the way they are dealt with. Do you want to add anything to that, Keith? No, okay.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Do you have any specific policies about involving the police in some of the areas?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

That is a very, very good question and I think when you speak to the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs - we were having a really good discussion about that the other day in a meeting - there are a lot of laws which young people need to be extremely aware of and careful of because they could get themselves very simply and quickly into the area where they are committing a crime. I think that is part of the education piece. What you think is an innocuous thing, well, that is extremely nasty, is illegal. If you take an image of somebody and misuse it, it is illegal. I think that is the piece of work that needs to go on across our society. These are the laws that exist; this is what is illegal in our society.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

But in terms of the C.Y.P.E.S. threshold, so if, for example, you have an app that could be considered criminal within a school environment, do you …

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

We would report it to the police.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is that automatic? Do you require the consent of the parents?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

It is a good question. I think the school would report it to the police and the community police officer for advice on what to do next. In terms of the perpetrator or the person being …

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Both. Again, it is just the question about boundaries and thresholds because if you have the ingredients of an offence committed within your school but, for example, the parent says: "I do not want you to report this to the police."

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

No, you are right. I think advice will have to be taken, legal advice will have to be taken. This is where the community police officer is involved, so important role in schools because they are attached to the schools and they know. If a child does something which is, to be quite frank and to put it simply, just really stupid, they have done it and they have got themselves in a whole lot of mess and it is the first time ever, et cetera, involving the community police officer can have a massive impact to involve with the family, et cetera. Whether that needs to go to an actual criminal prosecution or a prosecution of any form is another question that needs to be gone through. I hope we do not have to criminalise children to change behaviour, that they learn from it. It is part of the education piece.

Assistant Director of Policy, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

Just to add to what you are saying and if we use our safeguarding gaze in that example and we put in a school, that they are concerned about the act and also other contributing factors, that route of escalation to other safeguarding partners, which we include States of Jersey Police, is an example of …

Deputy H.M. Miles:

It does give you some sort of mechanism rather than a free for all.

Assistant Director of Policy, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:

That will give you the bigger picture quite quickly and as those multiagency safeguarding meetings or discussions will quite quickly give you a clear steer in terms of how to deal with the …

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Potential criminal responsibility is at 16.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Ten.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, but for online …

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

They are the same yes.

Assistant Director of Policy, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Is it different to distinguish? But it is your point about criminalising.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Yes, and we have a Parish Hall Inquiry system obviously and other mechanisms …

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I am just thinking, what happens with 16 and 18 year-olds? But we are getting into a mire here, sorry, sorry.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
We have talked about the cyberbullying link. How are we addressing the risks around sharing and accessing self-harm and suicide-related content online within schools?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
This is one of the biggest concerns that I have and I am a parent as well. My children have grown up but I still worry unduly. No, I do not think I do. With our online systems that we can control, I think that we have good filters, we can measure and we can intervene. I think it is the areas we cannot control outside school, and this is where the education piece I think with parents and parents working with schools is really important. This, I think, is an area where a public health campaign, not just from schools but from Home Affairs, from Economy Department. I had a very interesting meeting with the Institute of Directors and some others who came along, including somebody who had made a submission to your panel, really, really good open discussion and say: "What can we do in that arena?" Let us talk to businesses about how can we help with online harm. I think those groups across our society working together is one of the key things. We cannot do everything in schools. Parents cannot do everything on their own. Young people cannot do everything on their own, they are going to meet a problem where they need help.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
What resources are available to children and young people who have experienced online harm?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
There is safeguarding, there will be referrals to support through C.A.M.H.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) if necessary, through …

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

There will be training for teachers in understanding the signs within the schools. There will be expertise provided, so just various training of staff and our best practice and …

Deputy H.M. Miles:
What information have we got to show that those resources are effective in providing the appropriate support?

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
It has just been embedded into the safeguarding audit. There is a recent update, so I would not be able to collect data previously but going forward …

Deputy H.M. Miles:
No, no, no, no, but you have acknowledged this.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Yes, absolutely.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Having said that, it is not easy to do, it is really not easy to do, but I think it is a really important step forward. This is the point made ages ago in this with it, was that if things are not perfect do not try and hide that; let us try and improve them, yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Can I just ask a quick question? Because you mentioned the safeguarding audits a few times, what happens to the outcome of the safeguarding audits? I expect that it goes back to the school and the schools' head teachers discuss it.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
We work with the school, it is a partnership. The whole point is a self-improvement tool. The idea is it is a living document to make the improvements, if there are any, in any specific areas.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
A school gets the audit and it goes back and you said that was done yearly.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Yes, annually, yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is there an expectation from the department that if 2 months later the school encounters are different, something that they have not come across before? Then that would not wait until the next safeguarding audit, okay.

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
Absolutely.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes, absolutely. That is the openness I am talking about, and if we can get anything across in the schools today it is, please, let us have that conversation because we know this is a changing world. It is not fine, we would rather it did not and it stayed static and we were in charge of it would be great but the reality is not that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
Okay. I am just going to move on to some children's rights stuff but before I do that, we are obviously going to hear from schools but what do you think head teachers would say is the biggest challenge? Where is the biggest challenge that they are really asking for support from the department for?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I think that personally - and I will ask Keith as well because he has a real insight into that - there are 2 things for me. One is the networks that they have that they can control to keep them up to date in wi-fi and all of the equipment within the schools and it is that digital inequality thing. That, I think, is a huge challenge. The other challenge is the uncontrollables, how can we police mobile phones and be supported to do that?

[11:15]

Because we are being asked to police it. Let us not beat around the bush, schools are being asked to say: "We are not going to have mobile phones" and 96 per cent of the time they are not, more than that now and it will become 100 per cent I am sure pretty soon. How are we going to police that? What happens if they do not get support from outside, from parents? What happens when incidents do happen and they escalate? Because for some young people they will and that is the support that is needed. If I give a really clear message today from this hearing, which is please support schools in the policies they have. Talk to your children and say: "This is your school's policy, I want you to do this when you are at school. I will not support you if you are caught doing anything else. Do not come running to me when your phone is taken away for a week and confiscated and do not make me have to go into school and get your phone back." Have that conversation with your

children. Support the school and the school will support you; that will really help head teachers I think.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Thank you. I had some questions around voice of the child but I think you have articulated those really clearly throughout the hearing. I am just looking, I do not know, Chair, we have not got enough time left. I am just wondering if you could maybe put some of the U.N.C.R.C. (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) questions into writing.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Then pass it maybe over. Perhaps if I can just ask 33, the one question.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes, I think so.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

In 2017, as we know, there is a Care Inquiry highlighted that Jersey had historically lagged quite far behind other jurisdictions in updating its child protection laws.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, absolutely.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Clearly, a lot of work was done and the 2022 law has come in and you have articulated the actual breadth of that law, so thank you for doing that. How do we ensure that legislation to address online safety is not similarly delayed? What do you see as your role, as Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, in that?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think a recognition that children and young people need to be included as part of any digital harms, guidance is important. Also, where the legislation sits and what it aims to do I think needs to be clearly defined. I do not mean to be critical of the U.K. Government, but I think they have passed legislation and I think there is a concept that that is it, we have fixed it, and they simply have not. I saw something, and I think you will probably talk about this later with other Ministers and I will need to look at it again because it was suggested to me, I would like to read about it, is that since they

have passed the law things have got worse. That is either poor legislation or it is not being applied appropriately.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

I think …

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Sorry, I will just say the legislation means that it needs to be right for Jersey and right for our children; that is what we have learned from the Care Commission, to include exactly that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Yes, I think what I am trying to get at is the priority of this.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, I see, yes.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

The Independent Jersey Care Inquiry concluded: "The welfare and interests of children are absolutely paramount and trump all other considerations" and that was a line.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. No, I agree.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

When you are sitting around the Council of Ministers table and you are discussing legislative priorities, how are you, as Minister, going to remember that comment to make sure that things like online safety are prioritised over other areas, given the seriousness of this topic?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, I believe you are talking to the Minister later and he may have something to say to you, so I cannot say anything there. I do not want to because that would not be the right thing to do. But, yes, absolutely. As I mentioned the group we had the other day, I think that is one of the places for that as well. I know I have the support of the Minister for Children and Families and the Minister for Sustainable Economic Development, who has a role for some of the law and certainly would want to make the right changes. I know that the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs can point to a number of laws, particularly around violence against women and girls, for example, which will be applicable. I think things are coming together and I think that priority is there. I would just say we need to make sure that the legislation is right and effective because what we do not want to do is

tick a box. That was another part of the Care Inquiry, saying you cannot just tick a box and say it is done; it is an ongoing process. But, yes, it is a good question and I think it is an ongoing challenge and one that we should all take on. I hope it is taken on by everybody across the Assembly as well because we are all corporate parents, we need to remember that.

Deputy H.M. Miles:

We are indeed, yes. Thank you very much for that answer.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Thanks for the question and we will keep that in mind. Thank you seriously.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Yes. Just I was going to mention about the role of the corporate parent as well. It means that the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning has to also look at the welfare of children across the board, as does the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs and the other Ministers we are questioning. Yes, I have just got some questions around the future outlook now. I think one of the main ones I will ask is: where do you see the most significant gaps or weaknesses in our current approach to safeguarding children online?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes. I think there are 2 things. One is it is significant because of the change in environment that we have. We have to be realistic about the speed of change and keeping up with that change; that is a significant risk and we are all aware of that. Deep down it frightens all of us but also there is an enormous amount going on with a change of approach in terms of not just having a policy that is on the shelf, it is not. The approach is that we are developing policies, we can call them policies but they are ongoing, so that is one of the risks keeping up. The other one is around those things we cannot control, like access from mobile phones. We can get to a point in the schools where mobile phones are not used. We can get to a point where they will not be used at any point during the school day. But children's lives are more than just a school day. There are many, many, many hours. The largest percentage of the time is not spent in school. We have a real challenge as we go forward and how we keep children safe with smartphones. It would be great perhaps if children did not have smartphones at all. I have absolutely no idea how that would be managed because you would need every single parent on the Island on board. There are parents who would say to me: "Do not tell me how to parent", many would. We have that challenge; that is the contradictions we have. But what we need to do is move away from absolutes and we need to work together as a society, through all walks of our society to say: "What do we want for our children in terms of this?" We need to model it as adults. The biggest challenge is going to be that. Do I have a solution? I do not think any of us have one solution. But I think collectively we can get to a much better position

than we are perhaps now across the piece. I think this discussion, the openness of communication I think is really important. It would be great if we had less sensationalist stuff in our media and those discussions and a more measured and thoughtful approach to what we want to do, find the common themes and let us all work to them together. Just one final thing I will say to adults: please try and model the right behaviour online, because they do not; it is a real problem.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Okay, thanks. Talking of absolutes, in protecting children from exposure to harm through the conduit of the internet or electronic devices, is that different to protecting children from exposure to any other types of harm like tobacco, alcohol, driving a car? Because these are absolutes, are they not?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I do not know how to answer that question. Because we have clear rules around alcohol and tobacco, yes, of course. The problem with online is online is not just harm, online is also the world that we live in. Yes, if I could pass a law now that says all online harm is banned, it would be great, it would be fantastic, let us do that. Absolutely no one would disagree with it.

The Connétable of Grouville:

No, it would not be realistic.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

But we have to define what that is. It is more complex than that. But what we can do, sorry, just try and work, I think there needs to be more responsibility from the social media providers, from content providers as well. All societies are having challenges with that. I do not know what the solution to that is.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Do you think in that case that legislation should be part of the protections in place for children?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Again, I am going to say it depends on what that legislation is. The legislation has to be clear as to what it will address. If it is clear as to what it addresses and works, then, yes, I would be very supportive of it. I think we have things that are already there that we need to emphasise more. There are lots of laws around online behaviour, around data protection, around what data is and how we use it. This is not a cop out in any way because this is what I mean, I would support any legislation that is effective and the right thing to do. I do not think we can just impose legislation from somewhere else for Jersey. I think we have an opportunity to do the right things that we want

to do in a simple way if we had to take that on board. If it is the right thing to do, yes, I would support it.

Deputy H.M. Miles:
You would support legislation.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
But if it is a token gesture we need to avoid that because it voids the discussion in the first place.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Thank you. Okay. If it is clear you would support legislation and …

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
If it is the right legislation. Let me get that clear, it is really important. I do not want the panel to go away and think I am going to say any legislation that comes we are desperately in need of it. Now let us look at what comes forward first.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
I think we are always looking for the right legislation, are we not, rather than any legislation?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes, yes.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
Probably the last question then and we will have some written ones, if that is okay, to follow up. Minister, should there be an Island-wide strategy for protecting children from various forms of online harm?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes, that is exactly what we need, an Island-wide strategy in all elements of our community. We have to be careful, though, when we talk about strategies because they become, again, documents that go on the shelf. I think what we need is an Island-wide discussion and openness about where we are. Every member of our community is thinking: what is my responsibility in this? Be it businesses, being those who sell phones, those who sell data, parents, schools, health, all of these organisations. We need to start talking about what do we want for our young people? I am a parent, I was happy for my child to have a phone, but I was obsessed with what they were doing with it. They are now 25 and 28 and teaching me how to use my phone, which is quite interesting, so that is not going to go away. But I will say, yes, a strategy with that, I think some credit and some

examples of what to do could be taken from schools. Because they have spoken to young people. They have included their young people in changing their policies and they are trying to get somewhere where they are changing that behaviour with them, not to them. I would say to the panel if you want to talk to young people we can help facilitate that. I would always recommend if you are going to talk about this, and it is interesting, I would ask you whether you have had meetings with young people themselves and students of all ages. Because you will get an insight which we do not have because we are not that age. We can help facilitate that, we would be more than happy to do it. Every time I have spoken to young people about this I have learned something new and it is such an insight that you get from young people.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

Who would be drafting and organising this online, this Island-wide strategy?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

I think it needs to be a collective approach. I think the group that we have got together with, myself, the Minister for Children and Families, the group that we had the other day, and officers could certainly be a group that would work on something like that. Yes, I think we need to include …

Deputy H.M. Miles:

Is the Ministerial Safeguarding Group still in existence?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:

Yes, it is, it could be that. But, again, I wonder whether it starts with an emphasis from the sort of discussions that are happening, because things are changing quickly and then could become ingrained in that group simply but they need to have something that they are working on in the first place. It could be, I do not know, we cannot perceive this because it is such a complex area. I think awareness is such an important thing and that is where the public health issue comes in. We had a good meeting yesterday and we talked to the laws. There are lots of very strong laws that exist already. I can sit here and think, we have a lot of laws, do people know about these? I was on this panel some time ago and we talked to the Minister for Justice and Home Affairs and I had forgotten a lot of this. I think there is a lot there that we can already use as well. There is a lot of constructives that have been there.

Deputy C.D. Curtis:

We have those laws and I know from our discussions there was not much awareness of it at all, was there not? But also there is a complete lack of laws around quite a lot of harms to children, too. It is not a complete picture, is it?

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Yes.

Assistant Director of Policy, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
I think, just to add to the Minister's point about strategy, you have some existing strategic vehicles, such as the Children and Young People Law, that could be used as a vehicle to drive forward programmes of intervention. I think that is always the nervousness, is it not? You would write a strategy and, as you have just said, who is doing the intervention? Where is the change? With the Children and Young People Law, that is a children and young people's plan. You have something there that is malleable and can be shaped. You can get into programmes of intervention quite quickly.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
I wonder if we have been brave enough in the past to intervene in places because it is a nanny state. What I mean by that is you do not just take one approach, we recognise that parents have different views. Some parents do not want to be told what to do. However, it might need an intervention and say: "Okay, we are not going to tell you whether you should buy your child a mobile phone but this is the reality of the world that is there and this is what you can do about it." I know, Alexa, you have spoken to some parents who have come to you desperately asking: "What can I do to control this?"

Head of Governance and Digital, Children, Young People, Education and Skills:
They have, yes.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
You talk about the router and some parents say: "What is a router?" You say: "Okay, we can do this." There are things that we can do as well. I will explain it to you later, Constable.

The Connétable of Grouville:
Okay, thank you, thank you. **[Laughter]**

Deputy C.D. Curtis:
I think that is it then. We will follow up with questions in writing that we have missed out. Okay, thank you very much, everyone.

The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning:
Thank you for your time as well, thank you.

[11:30]