



Health and Social Security Sub-Panel

Family Friendly Legislation Review

Witness: Jersey Child Care Trust

Monday, 14th July 2025

Panel:

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour (Chair)

Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter

Witness:

Ms. F. Vacher, Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust

[15:33]

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour (Chair):

This is a public hearing with the Family Friendly Legislation Review Sub-panel, and we have Fiona Vacher, who is from the Jersey Child Care Trust. My name is Deputy Louise Doublet. I will let my panel introduce themselves.

Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement:

Deputy Karen Wilson, member of the panel.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

Deputy Lucy Stephenson, member of the panel.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Fiona, could you tell us what your role is at J.C.C.T. (Jersey Child Care Trust)? We have got some information up on the board there, anything you want to add about what J.C.C.T. does?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

So my role at the Trust is to lead the whole charity actually, so I am called the executive director, and that does say what we do. I will probably, as we go through, go through a little bit more about the roles that we have and the services that we offer, but that does summarise who we are. Do you want me to go through that now?

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

No, unless you want to.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Absolutely not.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

In the interest of time, we only have an hour, so we are aiming to finish at 4.30, so we will try and get through our questions as best we can and if there is any left over we might ask you to answer those in writing at the end.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Yes, perfect.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So how many families do you support annually with your services?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Around 160 a year.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

How do families find out about your services?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

The variety of services have different ways. We are a universal service in some respects, so a quick Google search, are top of Google for child care information, down to more specialised services where there are a variety of professionals that refer families to us, but also families can refer themselves as well to certain services.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Okay. In terms of the main issues that the families are facing, what would those be?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

It does depend on which programme, but if I could summarise into 2 categories, that would be families that are living in poverty and families who have children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Okay, thank you.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Obviously we are here to talk about the family-friendly amendments that were made to the Employment Law. There are 2 broad groups of changes in 2018, 2020 that we have put up there just to help summarise. Did your service have to respond to those changes in any way and do anything differently? If so, what did you have to do?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Well, we are an employer of over 25, mainly females. We, as an employer, had to make sure that what our employment practices were, were meeting the requirements of the law. We exceed them. But we always keep abreast of what the changes are. In terms of families, we have seen a pattern of change for families seeking child care later, so babies starting in nurseries a little bit older than perhaps they were before the changes. From a service perspective, we may well have ... if we were supporting a young child, it is rare but it has happened, where a child might need our support to be in a nursery from a young age. That could have been from 6 months old, and that has definitely got older in terms of pattern of families that need support.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Is there an average for now when children are not starting nursery or is that impossible to say?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I think if you ask the nurseries they give you the average. From what I have picked up from visits, it is not before 9 months; 9 to 12 months is what I have experienced as I go on a visit. It may well be different if you ask Jersey Early Years Association. They may have a much more informed view.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Are there any services that you would like to provide to families but cannot due to funding or resource issues? I am sure that might be how long is a piece of string question. We can come back to it if you would like to come back to it.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Give me a second to have a little think because there are gaps in the Island. We have a vision as a charity at the moment, so we fund children's nursery places for 2 to 3 year-olds who are living in poverty and have a developmental delay, so they have got that double whammy of challenge. In July last year, 10 children that we had on our programme, we could fund them, we could not find them a nursery place. So they missed out on that critical period of support, not because we did not have the money but because we could not find facilities for them. So the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning found out ... we reported this situation, and between C.Y.P.E.S. (Children, Young People, Education and Skills) and us, we have managed to open a new nursery on a school site at d'Auvergne School in a community room which is very self-sufficient. It has got its own facilities, all self-contained, and we have got 16 2 to 3 year-olds in that nursery that we are funding ... sorry, we are employing the people to work in that nursery and 16 families are benefiting. The Minister provides us with that space for that to happen. If we had unlimited funds, we would like to see more of that happen at the moment for children who have got additional needs, because the impact for each of those children is absolutely astounding in terms of their development. Children who had no language whatsoever, and they started in October - it took us 6 weeks to get the nursery up and running - but starting in October with no language and very difficult, dysregulated behaviours, are now smiling, happy, communicating, using words, linking words together, being able to communicate what they want and really getting a good experience in that nursery. If we think back to the 10 that missed out who were in a similar position, the difficulty that they will have now starting Nursery Education Fund year and going on to school will be tremendous. Yes, if we had all the money in the world we would be hoping to open more of them.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Was the challenge around staffing in nurseries or space in nurseries?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Our challenge was around funding because we have not got infinite funding and we literally raise enough money each year to help children to access nurseries with disabilities and to access through our 2 to 3 year-old programme. But there were not enough nursery places for them.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

So just it was places generally, full stop? There was not space for those children?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Yes, there just were not the spaces.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Just in terms of, if I could, chair, just as a little bit of a follow-up to that question. For those 10 children that missed out, what would you now look to do in terms of any support that you could give those children and where might you look for that support?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Those children, our programme helps children for 2 to 3 year-olds, that specific one. From thereon they have moved on to the Nursery Education Fund, so they have got 30 hours nursery funded by Government. They will be getting hopefully the support that they need from the nursery staff who will make referrals for whatever therapeutic services or interventions that they need, but that goes on to the setting that they are now in to make that happen.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Yes, so it is a case of capture.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Yes.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

I am just going to come back to the maternity leave experiences, parental leave experiences that people have and the people that you come into contact with. Is it your view that people are generally aware of their rights and responsibilities under Jersey's Employment Law? Do you know where they go to get this information and if there are any gaps that you see in their understanding?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I had that question in advance of today, and simply put I do not know. Because we come into contact with parents when they are choosing child care. Usually either after ... one of the glimpses of insight I can give you is that parents tell us that they have left choosing child care too late, they did not realise that they needed to look sooner rather than later, and have had difficulties making choices. But in terms of maternity and paternity and parental leave, we have not asked parents that because we see parents a little bit later on in terms of child care.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

In terms of your own personal experience with people that you talk to on a general level, do you pick anything up around that particular area at all?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Not at all. We just do not have those conversations.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

When people are trying to access or navigate parental leave, do you know whether there are any particular common challenges that people may well have experienced that they will talk to you about?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Our role, it does not really encourage that kind of conversation. But the insight that I would have would be around the families that we are supporting, there is a real lack of access to flexible working in any shape or form. A lot of the parents that we are supporting are working in very low paid jobs, often in zero-hour contracts, often playing tag team with each other. In the care industry, for example, a mum and a dad would be one doing a night shift and then one might work part-time. But, a 24-hour period could be a 12-hour night shift for one and a 12-hour day shift for the other. And the night shift is then caring for their child in the day. We have seen that quite a lot actually in terms of the families that we ... so when we have a panel meeting say ... we have, 3 panel meetings a year for our nursery funding programme for 2 to 3 year-olds, I would guess probably 20 to 30 families come through to each panel and we have seen an increase from 3 or 4 parents in those circumstances going up now in terms of an increase in the number of parents that are working but still living in poverty, and then working in very difficult circumstances playing that tag team round.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

In terms of some of the impacts of that, do you get to understand what the impacts of that situation are?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Yes, so I can talk personally about visits that I have made to Play and Learn, for example, that nursery at d'Auvergne.

[15:45]

A grandmother who is also part of the care team for her grandchildren, and the insight that she gave, and I had not asked much, I literally commented that it must be hard when she said: "Oh, I have been working tonight" and she broke down straight away. I thought: "Gosh, I had not pushed anything." It was a very kind of ... in a nursery, we were just chatting. I thought very easily that grandmother broke down and the pressure that they are under as a family to keep children healthy, safe and happy and keep earning around that. That was for all 3 of them, mum, dad and grandmother were sort of juggling shifts to make it work.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Obviously people are coming to you for advice about child care but if they are coming to you before that age 2, when they are still covered by the leave, so obviously each parent can take up to 52 weeks. So in theory, each child who has 2 parents could have 2 years at home. But you say that parents are coming to you around 9 months, 12 months. What can you tell us about how this law is working and how that interacts with your services?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

We know that it is not a real option for many of the families that we are supporting to stay off for 52 weeks because there is only 6 weeks' pay. I am asking you that question because I wanted to refer you to a report produced by the Isos partnership, and I can leave it with you. It is messages for Jersey from the U.K. (United Kingdom) and international evidence on optimising early childhood education and child care. I wanted to refer you to that today because there is some evidence in here that I think would be really useful to inform what you are looking at, but in it there is an error. It was just to highlight that this one says we have 32 weeks of paid parental leave, which obviously we do not, and I have highlighted it with policy officers, and they are going to be communicating with C.L.S. (Customer and Local Services) and changing the version that you have on the website, but I still think this is a very useful document. That was not the point that we were talking about. It is the real choice.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Should we just reflect on this? So it is 6 weeks' full pay, which the employer is required to provide. Then there is 18 weeks per parent of social security, which is, I think, £280 a week, or £281 a week, and that can be transferred. For example, the mother can take the 32 weeks or the father could take a mixture.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I see, okay. There is an interesting insight.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

This is why we have questions about it.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I used J.A.C.S.'s (Jersey Advisory & Conciliation Service) website to make sure that I was clear today, and there is a video on there which talks about how much pay you have, which is 6 weeks. I then Googled it through A.I. (artificial intelligence) as well, and it came up with 6 weeks. I then spoke to the policy officer about the 32 weeks, and I was like: "I cannot understand, it is saying everywhere it is 6 weeks." So I am confused, and I am a professional with a Masters in this area.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

You are not alone. This is why we have some questions about the communication of this law because some of the submissions that we have had so far have told us that people do not understand what is actually in the law. So that perfectly illustrates that.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

It is perfect.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

And you are not alone. There is a more detailed reckoner there, which I do not think we have actually got the amounts of pay on there but we would ... here we go. It is on the other side. There is a lump sum, the tax-free lump sum, which is the parental grant. There is the parental allowance which is the 32 weeks, that comes after the 6 weeks at full pay. Now we have that shared understanding, how does that interact with your services, and before that 2 years is provided in the law, what are people wanting in terms of child care versus staying at home and using their leave?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

There is a real mix, actually. A bit like there's no one child care solution for everyone. It is a real mix of different views from families that we pick up. Some would like to remain at home for 2 years with their children, others would like to return to work earlier, citing pressures around housing costs and living costs. Yes, it is a real mix.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

In terms of this legislation, how is this influencing parents, their decisions around when to return to work? Are people returning to work sooner than they would ideally like to?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

The bit that I was thinking about around the pay that a parent would receive is, does that really enable choice for families to remain off with their children? I think it is too low for parents to be able to afford that unless they have managed to save quite considerably before taking that time.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Do you think it enables choice?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I do not think so at the moment, not on that rate.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Sorry, I am just rephrasing some of my questions because you have already answered some of them. In terms of different types of parents, do you observe any patterns and different types of family setups?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Patterns in terms of, like taking ...

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

In terms of how they are using the law or how they are aware of the law perhaps.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I do not know if I am informed enough to know. I do not think I have spoken to parents enough to know that.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Okay, maybe let us think about single parents. Do you get contacts from single parents and do you notice any patterns there and what they are saying to you?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

The only contact that I can think of specifically around single parents, would be the referrals in to our panel for our nursery funding programmes. That is for the 2 to 3 year-olds. But in terms of patterns around maternity and paternity, parental leave, no.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Okay. Thank you. So when parents have come to you for advice, and then they may be accessing child care based on your advice, do you have any follow-up or are you able to see what happened following your advice and whether parents are happy with the kind of services they have accessed?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

It is information we give, we cannot give advice on child care. It is simply sharing information around what their choices are. They have got lots of different options around childminders, nannies, nurseries, et cetera. We can help them tailor their choices based on their finances or their situation. But in terms of follow-up, no, it is very much ... a lot of it now is on our website. Less in terms of face to face and less on the phone actually.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

If somebody had contacted you for advice but then ultimately decided not to access the child care options, would you know about that?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

No.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

In those conversations about child care at that point, am I right to assume that you might hear some feedback about going back to work, because the 2 usually coincide with each other, and I just wonder if there are any patterns that you might see come through about how people are going back to work, that transition back in, are they finding it easy, do they need a bit more support or ...?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Again because we have moved more on to the internet, the website, we do not have that. No, because as you are talking I am recalling instances of when we were based at the Bridge. So 10 to 5 years ago I could have called on a lot more but the patterns have changed now with parents. It is very much more online.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

That is where people are accessing their information, they go online and do people pick up the phone anymore or ...?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Rarely. For us rarely. A call or 2 a day,

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Social media and things like that as well or is it ...?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Not from our information on social media but I think that is something that we are thinking about going forward actually in terms of how we communicate with families because Reels and TikTok and things are the way that people are absorbing information. Parents obviously will need that information in different ways, so that is something we are thinking about.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

I suppose it is that thing about accessing the information at a time that suits you as well. It is usually when you have sat down at home - in my case - you have got an opportunity in an evening or whatever.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Exactly.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Fair enough. You mentioned earlier about flexible working and actually seeing some challenges around that. Could you maybe go into that a little bit more?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

So the families particularly on our Best Start Plus Nursery Funding Programme, so the 2 to 3 year-olds living in poverty and with developmental delay, there are some patterns there around families who are working for employers where they cannot offer them that flexibility or it is more difficult to. So the care industry, for example. It is more often the case that we see families that have no option for flexible working, certainly. Then things like holidays, they are on zero-hours contracts and the holidays are rolled up into their pay, and so they do not take holidays, they continue working through. There are certainly some increased pressures on the lower earners that we have seen as parents.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Okay, thank you very much.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

You have provided some feedback that suggests that babies are joining nurseries later, before the legislation was introduced. Does this, in your view, indicate that parents are taking fuller advantage of leave entitlements or not? How do you think that a reduction in the demand for the infant places may be impacting on those nurseries?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Two things in one question; you see I have to write notes. I think that the parents that are accessing nurseries are accessing nurseries because they can afford or are managing to in some way afford to pay for nursery. I am not saying it is affordable but they are managing to book that service. They are in a different situation to those that are on a lower income and they will have perhaps more choices available to them to decide whether they would like to start in a nursery and when they would like to start. So it could suggest that those parents have more opportunities to take more time in their maternity parental leave. The impact on nurseries, yes, I think the business model is having to change and shift and that they are taking babies who are slightly older onwards. This report actually is a useful one, the Isos report, because it is basically a collection of the best evidence, and that indicates that it is not a bad thing that children are not in nursery at 6 months. It should be something that we should be aspiring for children to be starting nursery later so that they have that opportunity, particularly in the first 12 months, to bond with their caregivers, so their parents usually or their carers. When you have that really good secure bonding and attachment with your parents

or your carers, your main carers, then you are in a much better position to explore the world in a much more confident and happy, healthy way. So it is not a bad thing. It is for the nurseries a change, adapting to something different, having older babies. It is more challenging inducting a baby at 12 months rather than 6 months. It is horrendous as a parent, it is really hard because the baby is so attached to the parent, which is why it is so important in our nurseries that we have a very low turnover of staff, so that when the child does move into a nursery, that the attachment with the secondary caregiver is just as good. So when we are looking at quality of nurseries and quality of care, a high staff turnover indicates quite easily that that is not a good quality setting.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Could I just explore this a little bit? You have talked about the importance of choice and one of those choices is that parents may choose to bring their child along to nursery education later. But therein lies a dilemma in the sense that that period, even though you say the evidence suggests that there is no detriment, as it were, but that maybe suggests that the legislation is actually supporting parents to make that choice. Would you agree with that?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I am confused what you are saying about the detriment. Detriment to ...?

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

I do not mean detriment to nursery education, I mean the problems that you talked about. It is really difficult to get a 12 month-old child in and parents struggle and things, so perhaps "detriment" is the wrong word.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

It is harder emotionally.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

It is harder for that to happen. So do you think the legislation, given now that there has been quite a bit of flexibility built into 52 weeks for some financial support, do you think those conditions are leading people to delay the decision, but perhaps not aware of the difficulties that there are in trying to get a child into nursery education at a much later stage?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I do not think anyone should shy away from the difficulties at 12 months or later. I think that the legislation ... in an ideal world, I would love to see the legislation enabling parents to leave it a little bit longer if they can. Yes, there would not be a preference for a baby to go in at 6 months because

it is easier than 12 months, because otherwise you have missed that window of opportunity around that good secure bonding and attachment.

[16:00]

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

My point is more about do you think that the legislation is lending itself to support parental choice around delaying that entry into nursery education?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

For some. For those who can afford it, yes. Yes, absolutely. When you think of the conditions that perhaps somebody in the finance sector would be in, in employment, then that is a completely different kettle of fish to a family that perhaps we are working with. So for those families who might be able to afford it, yes, I think the legislation is.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Do you think the legislation reflects the variation in the pattern of need, if you like? Say, for example, you have just highlighted 2 different communities there, people working in the finance sector who might be more economically better off than maybe somebody who is reliant on income support. Do you think the legislation lends itself to help people make choice irrespective of whether they have that different economic position or do you think it is more favourable to one group or the other?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I think up to 6 weeks where you have got your full pay, then the choice is there, you are able to remain at home with your baby. After 6 weeks, I think because of the low amount that is paid to a parent, the choice is not there for all parents to be able to stay at home for a prolonged period of time.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Do you think the legislation reflects any impact that it may have on particular children in need with additional support requirements or anything like that? Do you think the legislation lends itself to supporting children with additional needs or disabilities?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I have not seen any differentiation at all for that.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

What would you do with this law? Obviously you have this understanding through the services that you provide of, like you said, children who are living in poverty and have additional needs. Is there anything that you would do to this legislation in terms of improving it for those particular cohorts of children? You can think about that for a minute if you want.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Well, if I had the time to dedicate to this, I think the first thing I would be doing is looking at some of the Nordic countries and how they enable their ... 97 per cent of their families remain at home until 2, and then at 2, almost 97 per cent of them are in a group care setting. They have not got it all 100 per cent right. There are good and not so great quality. We have heard from the O.E.C.D. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) when they came to speak in Jersey years ago, the quality is varying across the board in those countries as well but from a policy perspective families are able and enabled to stay at home for the first 2 years of life and then have options and provision available for them.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So would you say that is something that is aspirational, being able to stay at home with a child until they are 2 and then having the high quality provision? Is that something you think we should aspire to?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I feel that is aspirational, based on the outcomes that those countries have got in terms of the difference that that makes. But also having the options and the choices available, because there will be some families ... we have spoken to some families where an entrepreneur mum that I can remember speaking to said: "Gosh, I was back at work 6 days later, I could not leave my business and things." Fair enough, they probably had nannies around them. But there are a wealth of differences and needs from families, and I think that we need to think about how we can enable parents to have choice, real genuine choice, in how they can bring up their children and be a family.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So you would like to see something in the law that takes into account different types of families and some flexibility there?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Yes.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Can I follow up on that? I was just going to ask if you thought, as well as the legal side of that scenario, is there also a community and, I suppose, reducing the stigmas or changing the culture side that would need to happen in order for that model to work in somewhere like Jersey?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

What sort of stigma do you mean; about what?

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

The idea that people would stay at home for 2 years.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I see, and the perception of: "Well, are we paying for you to ...:?"

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

And also the stigma around maybe dads staying off work, but also what it might do to a woman's career or ... I do not know, all sorts of different things. It seems, in a personal opinion, it is a culture shift, or something like that would be a culture shift for Jersey as well.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Huge culture shift. Absolutely, a huge culture shift. But I think we have had a culture shift having had the changes to this legislation. I can speak from a personal experience of school pickups and the amount of more dads that do school pickups. I have seen that myself personally. I do think we are changing. I think that this could influence culture in terms of how we think. Another report which I was going to highlight to you, the Royal Foundation, Deloitte's produces for the Royal Foundation *Prioritising early childhood for a happier, healthier society*. That was exactly what they were saying as well. So another really helpful one, businesses have such a big role to play in this as well and how, based on what the businesses are saying and doing, that will influence culture significantly.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Just one thing, you mentioned earlier that choice again is an important thing and people will make choices to bring their children into a nursery education setting. Are there any people that choose not to do it, even though all of these benefits and entitlements are there, and do you know what that might be about at all?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Do you mean choose not to use any form of child care and choose to stay at home with their child until they start school?

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Yes.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Yes, we have met families where they have chosen to do that. When the Nursery Education Fund was first introduced, I remember some very strong comments made to me at an information stand about it saying: "You cannot force me to put my child into a setting" and absolutely, again choice. Absolutely, it is there as a benefit for you if you would like it but equally not. A bit like homeschooling and joining the school system.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Do you think there are any gaps in the legislation to support families in that position at all?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Who would like to remain ...

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

To promote the notion of family friendly, who would like to remain at home.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I think from a financial perspective there are some really creative things we could do around looking at where the Government's money is going so that that could enable some families to have that option.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

What would that look like, in your view?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Could it be a benefit to a family that they actually ... rather than the money going into the N.E.F. (Nursery Education Fund) pots, could that go to the families, so that parents could use it to create opportunities for their children in different ways? Just throwing things up a little bit and shaking it up and thinking can we ... the one thing being a charity is - and also being a charity that is running a nursery in a government building - really high, and we work really closely with Government, so we have got so much insight into this, is the agility and the flexibility and the creativeness that we can have as a charity, as long as we have enough money to be able to do it. Meeting the needs of children that we see and hear about, and the lack of agility that you have in Government because you have a very cumbersome, big ... it has to be run with very strict parameters. But that then

obviously loses that agility and that creativity. Would it not be lovely if we could have some thinking in Government, some enabling to have that agility that we can change things up a little bit?

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Could I just ask a final one on that one, chair? You get a grant from Government?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Yes.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

How creative have you been taking forward some of your aspirations as to what it could be like?

How creative have you been with the grant?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

The grant is ... I cannot remember how much percentage it is at the moment. Our total pot this year that we are going to be spending is £1.4 million. I think we have received £400,000 from Government. We have a service level agreement with Government and it is quite focused on certain projects and key performance indicators beautifully written in partnership with us. Between the 2 of us, Government and the Jersey Child Care Trust, we talk about what our impact will be, how we will measure that impact, and Government is agreeing that that is what they would like to receive in terms of key performance indicators. Again, we are raising £1 million, so the creativity comes from all that we are doing. Every programme that we run, we sit in each panel meeting and think we have nailed the referral form, and every single panel meeting we come away and we say: "I have got to tweak that, that is not quite meeting the needs of what we need" and as a team we can think differently about what we are doing very quickly and easily. I do not think there are any restrictions on us from Government. I have never experienced a restriction where Government said: "You cannot do that, we have agreed this."

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

So you would not use any of that grant to advance the family-friendly legislation but it is more about the indirect benefit around your programmes that would lean itself to compliance with the family-friendly legislation?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

We comply as employers with the family-friendly legislation and beyond. What do you mean by the grant enabling us?

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

What I am looking for is whether or not there is an approach that you take, whether the grant is almost an incentive for you to show and showcase the work that you do that is compliant with the family-friendly approach and means that the law is strengthened, if you like, through some of the things that you do. Or whether or not you do not even think of the legislation but you are more focused on your delivery as a charity in terms of some of the programmes.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I think we do think about the legislation and I think that we celebrate the fact we are an employer of choice, and we do our best to share key messages about how and why we are an employer of choice for our industry. Because when we opened Play and Learn, granted it was for term-time, part-time places, but we did not think we were going to be able to recruit to those 4 positions and we had 24 expressions of interest. We were bowled over by the response. When we were speaking to candidates we were hearing that we were offering something different, they liked us as an employer, that we prioritised families - genuinely prioritised families - that we had that flexibility of approach. So rather than: "We need you to work these hours", we were saying to the workforce: "What would work for you and your family, and then we will think how we can make that work with what we need?" I feel that we are a really exemplar example of how you can be a family-friendly employer in an Island, in an industry where there is a workforce crisis, where we have nurseries that have the space but do not have the workforce to work in it. That is one of the reasons why they cannot take as many children. So I think we do that already, but in our way.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Fiona, we have talked about the provision in the law, so we have established the 6 weeks paid by the employer and the 32 weeks of social security plus the grant, but then there is up to 2 years or it is one year per parent, so actually for single parent families it is one year, is it not?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

True.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Can you comment on that particular gap, first of all? I will ask you about some other gaps, but single parents, first of all; how are they impacted by this law?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

That is something I have not thought about. You are absolutely right. We often talk about the juggle that parents have, and parents being plural, but if it is a single parent, then yes, they are restricted to one year. When we think about everything that we were saying in the Isos report, which talks about the ... one of the principles that this is founded on is the importance of the home environment.

Talking about what we were saying about that up to 2-year period can be really beneficial for the child, a single parent does not have that choice and that option.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

What would you change in the law then to remedy that?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

As a single parent, I would certainly say that you should be extending that to the 2 years.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Thank you.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Would you see any opportunity or have any thoughts around being able to share that with other people as a single parent; grandparents, for example?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

One of the things that we notice, and going back to that person that broke down in the nursery, the grandparent, is that grandparents are also working. Yes, I mean if there was that opportunity, I think the impact ... you would need to think about the impact around employers as well, but if you had an extended family member that was able to take that, that could be a really good way forward.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

This is what I was going to ask about, the gap. Even if somebody, the parents, could afford to care for their children at home for 2 years or a year each, there will be people that, as we have reflected on, that cannot afford to do that.

[16:15]

There is a gap, is there not? Even if you can take the full 2 years and then the nursery funding starts at 3, what happens in that gap? What are families doing in that gap?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I do not know. I mean we are obviously supporting about 85; about 10 per cent of the 2 to 3 year-old cohort with that gap. But I do not know and it sort of stems back to the question where I answered to you at the start and I said I do not know because parents have not told us. We can ask parents what they think about certain things but there is going to be a group of parents that we will not be

able to reach and we will not be able to hear from. I think it is focusing on how we can hear from them. I think using charities is one really good way of doing that.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So collecting more data you think would help us to understand?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Just to hear from parents.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

In terms of that gap again, if parents are not able to afford child care but they cannot stay off work, are you aware of unregistered child care being an issue?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

So I know that Childcare and Early Years Service hear reports and they will go and investigate. We do not at the Trust - rarely will hear - and if we do then obviously straight away we would refer it to Childcare and Early Years Service. Sometimes we will have people innocently calling about ... making inquiries around if they would like to become a childminder, for example, or a nanny, and there is a real lack of understanding sometimes about which is what role and who cares for who where in their own home or in the child's home. So we can have people who will not realise that they are in a slightly wonky situation, so we will give them information and say: "You need to be based in the child's home or your home needs to be registered under the requirements of the Day Care of Children (Jersey) Law. Usually that is just a case of lack of information.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Are you ever concerned about things that you hear?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

The cases that we have had, no, but I know that Child Care and Early Years Service would be involved.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Could I just ask you, of the number of families that you engage with, what sort of proportion of families disengage from nursery support? Do you have them for that whole 2, 3-year period or are there periods where families say: "I just cannot afford this anymore" or: "I cannot sustain being in work and therefore I am going to look after my child at home?" Do you ever have any stories like that at all?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

So our nursery funding programme does have stories where referrals will come in from somebody who they had been funding a portion of nursery each week and it was completely unaffordable, they were going into debt. We usually have one or 2 for a panel that would be in those circumstances. That takes a lot to come up to the surface and to do that. So usually they are identified by health visitors in a 2-year check, which is a universal offer for all children, which is how we get our referrals for that programme.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

What would you say the dropout rate is?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I have no idea. Again, that is a Jersey Early Years Association one. And they may well not know the reasons why somebody has left the nursery because it is a really personal thing, is it not, to reflect that things are not going great?

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

In terms of the legislation, obviously you have already given some suggestions and ideas, just looking at the 2020 legislation there, is there anything that you think could be further improved on that list or anything that is not there at all that you would add in to that legislation to improve it?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I do not know beyond what we have spoken about. I do not know.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I wanted to reflect on something that you said about encouraging the dads to take the leave and that culture change, which I think you mentioned. Although the way that our leave, our law is drafted, it is completely equal, so parent 1 and parent 2, they have the equal right to the 52 weeks. In some countries, you can share portions of the leave, but then often the fathers end up taking less leave. What comment can you make on whether you would recommend that or not?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I think from an employer perspective, it does not appear fair. If you are an employer of mainly females, for example, it just does not sit quite squarely. If you have that equal year opportunity to take each, you have got that key message going out to both parents that you are equally entitled to because you are equally parents. I think if you start moving it to one carer, it changes the shift and then changes that cultural shift that you would be hoping for more of.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So that might be a backwards move if that was ... okay.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

The bit from the business world that I have picked up as well on LinkedIn, is the number of father parents who have posted about their experiences of positiveness of their employers, usually the finance sector actually, but have made those comments and how they have celebrated being parents and being able to be parents and how their employers enabled that to happen.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

That is really good to hear. That is really positive and that is certainly what we have heard when we have done our pop-up sessions, and at some baby groups we have spoken to some dads and gratitude was expressed I think for that change. I think people are still ... it is still sinking in, is it not, to some families that actually that dads are just as important, are they not? I had another question, it has gone out of my head. Do you have any final ones that you would like to ask?

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Do you have any view of whether there are any sectors that do not or that choose not to access nursery education at all?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Any sectors of ... you mean employees that work in the sector that choose not to access ...

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Yes, you would not have that intelligence available to you?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Well, I suppose a theme that comes through from our families that are referred to us for the nursery funding programme, so living in poverty, that would be ... there are a number of carers that have come through, a number are new to Jersey, so people that have come in on visas from Kenya, for example, that have been referred to us, working in the care industry. I suppose what they all have in common is the lower earning, no matter which.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

So that goes hand in hand, really, with the choice that if they need your support it is generally because they are on a lower income.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Yes.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Okay, thank you.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

I think you mentioned a few times maybe health visitors, 2-year checks, that kind of thing. Family Nursing and Home Care are one of your partners who you work with?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Very much so.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Can you just tell us a little bit about how you work with these, and we are going to be speaking to them in another hearing as well.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I suppose there are all sorts of tentacles into different ways we work with them but essentially I would describe family nursing as our eyes and ears in the Island. It is a crucial service where they offer that universal healthcare to every baby up to the age of 5 and from pre-birth as well. We are co-located with a team of them at Pip's Place, obviously, so they have the lower floor and they offer weaning workshops and stay and play sessions and things. Invariably, we are sharing the same families who will access their services initially and then come on to us for their nursery funding. We are also co-located with Mind Jersey, who again support families, particularly young ... not young, sorry, mums who may be struggling with their mental health. There is a real theme running through the families who are living in poverty, the children have developmental delays of poor mental health as well. Actually in terms of partnership working there are a number of different charities that we work with and departments that support families in different ways with us.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Those families that struggle with mental health, is there anything you think that the law could do to better support those families, in particular?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Well I think having that real choice to be able to be a family for a longer period of time than 6 weeks paid fully to reduce that financial stress and pressure on parents so they have a real opportunity to stay off work with their children for time to recover for themselves having given birth, but then also

to become parents and a family, to hopefully breastfeed, if that is their choice. Just adjust, totally adjust and to, yes.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

It is that choice, is it not, again that you keep coming back to? If we were to achieve that true choice, what impact would that have on the children of Jersey?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

It would impact the whole society and we would have happier healthier children and we would have happier and healthier eventual adults. It would transform I think some of the ways that we fund certain services. I think I would shift how and what we fund and change things.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

If you were to point to an ideal model in a country that you respect and consider maybe Jersey's legislation could aspire to something like that, where would you choose?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

I would look to the Nordic countries, definitely. I have not had time to say whether it would be Denmark or Sweden, but the Nordic countries have certainly got the model that makes the most sense in terms of brain development and everything we know about what children and families need, and then eventually the community, because we all want happier, healthier adults at the end of the day.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Do you have a final question?

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

No, not from me.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Okay, is there anything that you would like to add or add more detail to before we close the hearing?

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

The one stat that I normally start off with, which I did not, and I think it is really important to base everything of what we do and why we do it, is that 80 per cent of your brain is developed by 3. If we just took language development for a minute, that peaks at 9 months old. So when we are talking about ... we were saying babies going to nursery at 12 months old, well your language development has peaked by 9 months so as long as you are living in a good home learning environment you are

going to have a really good start, certainly for your language development, for example, and that we really should keep in mind that those first 3 years and the experiences that we have really amount to what you have as an adult in terms of your well-being.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Thank you very much for answering all of our questions today, and thank you for your time. We will close the hearing now.

Executive Director, Jersey Child Care Trust:

Thank you.

[16:27]