



Health and Social Scrutiny Sub-Panel

Family Friendly Legislation Review

Witness: (Brighter Futures)

Monday, 14th July 2025

Panel:

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

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

Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement

Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter

Witnesses:

Ms. L. Maggs, Operations Manager, Brighter Futures

Ms. M. Bailey, Deputy Manager, Brighter Futures

Ms. L. Pires, Senior Coordinator, Brighter Futures

Mr. M. Bucur, Fundraising, Events and Partnerships Manager, Brighter Futures

Ms. J. Hanson, Trusts and Grants Manager, Brighter Futures

Ms. S. Goguelin, Former Client of Brighter Futures

Ms. K. Goguelin, Current Client of Brighter Futures

Ms. S. Nibbs, Ambassador, Brighter Futures

[14:04]

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

Good afternoon, everybody. We are the Family Friendly Legislation Review Sub-Panel and this is a public hearing with the charity Brighter Futures. We are so grateful to have you all here today. There is quite a few of you and thank you for your time and joining us today. In a moment I am going to do introductions, I will introduce myself and the panel and you can introduce the team that you have brought with you today. I just wanted to make a note about timing, we have this room until

3.00 p.m. and we have got quite a lot of questions to get through, so if you could keep your answers quite brief when we are asking the questions. If there is anything that you cannot fit in you can always follow up in writing after the hearing. Usually when we do these public hearings we have got Ministers in front of us and our job is to hold the Ministers to account. That is not the purpose of the hearing today. The purpose of this hearing is to gather evidence, so it is completely open for you to say your views to us and we will put that evidence into our report. So everybody has checked that their mobile phones are off. I am Deputy Louise Doublet and I am the Chair of this Sub-Panel and I will let the rest of my panel introduce themselves.

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

Deputy Lucy Stephenson, a member of the panel.

Deputy K.M. Wilson of St. Clement:

Deputy Karen Wilson, member of the panel.

Deputy K.L. Moore of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:

Deputy Kristina Moore, I am a member of the panel.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Lauren, could you start with your introductions?

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

I am Lauren Maggs, I am the Operational Manager at Brighter Futures.

Deputy Manager, Brighter Futures:

I am Margret Bailey, I am the Deputy Manager at Brighter Futures.

Senior Coordinator, Brighter Futures:

I am Louise Pires, I am a Senior Coordinator at Brighter Futures.

Ambassador, Brighter Futures:

I am Sarah Nibbs, I am an Ambassador for Brighter Futures.

Current Client of Brighter Futures:

I am Kerry Goguelin, I am a current client at Brighter Futures.

Former Client of Brighter Futures:

I am Samantha Goguelin, I am a Parent Ambassador but also a leaver of Brighter Futures.

Fundraising, Events and Partnerships Manager, Brighter Futures:

My name is Marcel Bucur and I am the Fundraising, Events and Partnership Manager.

Trusts and Grants Manager, Brighter Futures:

And I am Judith Hanson, Trusts and Grants Manager at Brighter Futures.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Great, and welcome to you all. We have put some information up here just so that we have got a mutual understanding of what your charity does and I think that our panel has quite a good understanding of what your charity does. But is there anything that you would like to add to that description of what your charity does and what your core services are?

Trusts and Grants Manager, Brighter Futures:

So I suppose the one thing just to give you an update of where we are as a charity, the charity supports 150 families at any one time but currently we are supporting 163 families, which includes 4 dads, 26 perinatal journey, and also 22 of them which are high-level children in need and child protection level, just to give you an update of where we are there. As far as the charity, obviously we employ a number of staff. We have got 26 staff but included in the 26 staff is coordinators who give one-to-one support to the families. The coordinator role is split between 2 different things. So 50 per cent is to the programmes that we offer, which is currently 25 programmes all circling around parents and child relationships, well-being and positive mental health, and also second chance learning. Out of those programmes, obviously the other 50 per cent of their job is the one-to-one coordinator support, which is where we work with a lot of outside agencies as well. So we are constantly signposting because obviously we cannot fix everything. If there is other agencies which are out there that are giving support, then we know what support that is out there, a lot of the people that come through our door do not know what is out there and that is where we come into our own. We are constantly seeing with the feedback that we get from our families that that is really beneficial that we can signpost. One, if English is not their first language because we are a multilingual staff. But also if you have got anxiety and you really do not want to sort of stand in front of a total stranger and talk about what help you are needing. That is where our coordinators will stand alongside the families and work with them.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So your charity does an awful lot. It sounds like you achieve a lot. How do families and individuals find out about all the services that you offer?

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

Our main referrals at the moment are self-referrals. That has definitely increased since COVID. We have seen lots more people being more open to support around their family challenges. Second that we get health visitors are our second biggest referrers. But we get referred in by all sorts of different agencies. So we have had one recently from the British Red Cross, which we had not had before. I think now we have moved out to the west of the Island as well, lots of the schools around there are now referring in. So we have got a huge range of referrers that are referring to Brighter Futures.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Thank you. So you mentioned self-referrals. When people self-refer to you, how are they finding out that you exist?

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

So I think a big boom within Brighter Futures is definitely our perinatal pathway. So, as Jude just said, we have got 26 perinatal clients at the moment and we have been put in the pregnancy pack, so when they go to hospital, our Brighter Futures, Brighter Storks programme is in the packs. They all use their antenatal appointment so they can go to any antenatal appointments. They use that as an antenatal appointment and to come to our Brighter Storks programme.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I see. So within the legislation, obviously people can go to antenatal appointments within their work time. So going to Brighter Futures is classed as one of those appointments. I was not aware of that. That is really interesting.

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

Yes. Employers seem to have been really, really open to that. Colleagues are obviously going to that as well. From our perinatal programme, because obviously we are talking about the legislation to our families a lot, and we do not feel that they know about the dads also getting the 10 hours as well. We do not think that is something on lots of the mums-to-be radar, so that is something that we are speaking about a lot more. But, yes, lots of people use it and then if the employer is not happy for them to use it as their antenatal, they will often use it as like an early lunch break and come on a morning, which is great.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So you mentioned dads. We have a section of questions on fathers later on and so we will come back to that.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Obviously, it can be quite a wide question, and recognising that everyone has different and unique experiences, but what would you say are some of the main issues that face the families that you work with? Is it possible to kind of draw some themes out as briefly as possible, if you can?

Deputy Manager, Brighter Futures:

I suppose not having extended family here in Jersey can be quite lonely. I am from Scotland. You do not have your mum and your dad here. So I think sometimes, and especially now, there is lots of different people from different countries come over. So if your husband is out working, you have got your little one there, it can be quite lonely, unless you have got the confidence to go out to different play groups and things. If English, again, is not your first language, that can be quite daunting. So I think that, I mean we get quite a few referrals from perinatal mental health too from G.P.s (general practitioners). So there can be lots of different reasons that people come. But probably for me, I think a lot of people need support people in the same position as you, maybe. Sometimes it is quite nice to have that familiarity, is it not, when everyone else is off with their children. Whether you have left a full-time job, no one leaves with you, do they? You know, everyone else, all your colleagues are still in work. So, for those people who are maybe not so lonely at work, it can be very lonely, I feel, starting out being a mother on your own, and especially if you have not got family in Jersey as well.

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

We get a lot of referrals in as well for family relationships, really that kind of concern around it, it might be your health visitor, might be a social worker referring in, because of the concerns around that kind of the attachment and bonding within the family relationship. Often it is because, we talk about mum going out to work during the night and then coming back, and then dad walking out the door as mum is coming in, and that is happening a lot with lots of our families. That has an impact on the whole family well-being. So we often get referrals in, so that is not just one answer to your question.

Trusts and Grants Manager, Brighter Futures:

It does shift as well. The reasons do shift. I mean, obviously, after COVID, it was very much well-being. It was like everybody was just like, right, got to get all well-being, and that was the main sort of reason for referral. But I think more and more people are getting to know what we do as a charity as well. So, obviously, we are start to finish, so as people come in through the door, we literally say: "Okay, what was the main support that you are looking for?" So it is a holistic package of support of, what do you want us to concentrate on, is it the parent and child relationships, well-being, whatever? But often it can start in one area, but then as the journey progresses, things to start to unravel, and then we are going: "Okay, then, right, we can concentrate on this bit now". So it does

swap and change and we are not a quick fix and I think that is why, if they are with us up to 3 years, then it can change as it goes along, as life happens.

[14:15]

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Yes, families might come to you for loneliness and not having extended family nearby, and then you might discover that there is mental health problems and attachment problems, and you can coordinate all of those needs. Yes, it sounds like there is a lot that you are doing. The next question starts to relate to the changes that we have seen in the family friendly changes to the Employment Law. We have had 2 lots of changes in 2018 and 2020. How has Brighter Futures had to respond to those changes? Have you had to do anything differently because of the changes or seen opportunities along the way where you can do things differently?

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

It is just updating and always having those conversations. The big thing is that lots of our families do not know their entitlement and that is the conversation that we are having quite a lot. I know Judith spoke about our connections with other agencies. That is something that we are often doing, going back, having those conversations, supporting them going back to work and things like that. It is just ensuring they are aware really is the Brighter Futures part of that and how we can support with that. Because sometimes they are not aware of changes and things like that. So that is why we put out the surveys or we put things on social media to make sure that everybody is aware of those changes.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Thanks for that, Lauren. You just highlighted 2 issues there, which is those people who are in work and want to get back and do not know what their rights and their entitlements are, but also those people who have not entered the workspace at the moment. So you are saying that there is a difference in people's understanding there. Can you share with us, when you talk to parents, do they talk to you about what they know and what they do not know, or is it something that you have to bring up as part of the conversation?

Former Client of Brighter Futures:

It is more you have to bring it up because they did not really have a clue what was in place, really. It is just you would know what you know from Social Security, but just snippets. Whereas, if you went to Brighter Futures, they will sit you down and explain everything fully to you and know what you are entitled to, where you can go from here. So it is more of a friendly environment as well. It is like a family away from home, 100 per cent. Me being a leaver, I was there for my daughter being

18 months until she left at 3 to go to nursery. Then I had a couple of months with my younger one as well. So I would love to go back. I am glad that I can help support being a Parent Ambassador. So if people wanted to know questions, they could come willingly and just go: "Sam, have you done this? Have you done that?" Then, if I am not sure of the answer, then I can go back to my old key worker, like Louise, just say: "Louise, one of your clients has come to me. Can you give me more information?" Louise is still happy enough to keep in contact with leavers as well as her current clients.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Is that like a peer support kind of model?

Former Client of Brighter Futures:

Yes, 100 per cent. Like you feel like you are not the only person going through this. There is other people the same as you going through the same things and it gives you some hope that you are not on your own.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Do you think that the majority of people that you support are not aware of their entitlements?

Former Client of Brighter Futures:

Yes, 100 per cent.

Senior Coordinator, Brighter Futures:

Then when you hear or you support somebody through that journey, it is nice, like Sam said, to then buddy up and say that this person has been through this process, this is their experience of it, what can you learn from it and where can you go for support? So it is exactly that, the buddy system works really well.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

What do you think are the negative impacts of people not knowing their benefits and their entitlements; what have you seen?

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

We have seen people living in poverty because they are not sure what they are entitled to and what they can have and what they cannot have. We see that on a regular basis. So I am looking at one of our coordinators because Louise would see it more from where she sits. But, yes, not realising what they are entitled to, we see lots of families struggling to afford food to put on the table and things like that.

Fundraising, Events and Partnerships Manager, Brighter Futures:

And damaging families' well-being as well, not knowing everything.

Deputy Manager, Brighter Futures:

Yes, I think the worry of going back to work as well, would kind of put you off, really thinking, can I go back to work? We were talking before saying that, can I go back to work now that I am a mum or a dad, because my child is going to be off every 6 weeks; what is going to happen then? Then they are off for the summer holidays. What is going to happen then? It is quite difficult to find a job that is term time, not all jobs are term time, and it is talking about flexible working hours, but how flexible is it out there? It is not that flexible.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

It is not that flexible. Did you want to add something?

Ambassador, Brighter Futures:

I just wanted to add that I think from my experience of working at Brighter Futures and being an Ambassador is that life can be pretty acute there. So you might just get someone coming in through the front door and we have to make sure we have got some co-op vouchers. We have the larder that is essentially our food bank, and we will try to relieve that immediate need. Quite honestly, that shame, I think that a big emotion can be isolation, number 2, shame, that you are supposed to be a provider and perhaps you do not feel you can be. The way that we have tried to respond to that, just because it is going to be topical with summer holidays coming up, I think we are going into our third year of Breakfast Club now, and that is something that Lauren, Margret and the coordinators, we were realising over summer holidays that families were falling more into isolation and I do not know if I can just give you a couple of minutes about the Breakfast Club. We do have a supporter for that, but basically families are welcomed into it, we make it into a club, it is the Ruthie Raccoon Breakfast Club, everyone gets a t-shirt and you can have a healthy start to your day. But, more importantly, you get company, you get a play space, you can make some food up for later as well. So I would say that there is an education piece in there, because we are also doing something we are trying to do around nutrition, we are trying to do around everyone having a nice start to the day, but underpinning it is that absolute economic necessity. As I say, I think it is our third year now, and I just wanted to talk about Breakfast Club because that is going to be big for 6 weeks.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

It is really important, in terms of making sure that the legislative framework has some real impact, is it not, so that is a really good example. One of the things that I just wanted to understand is your role particularly as a coordinator, Louise, when you are talking to parents, are there any things that

you think that employers could do better? So one of the things that we are looking to just establish is whether or not people get information or advice about their rights and entitlements and what is your view about those that do not?

Senior Coordinator, Brighter Futures:

Again, it depends on the employer. We were having this conversation before. I think there is some people on the Island that do it really well and some people that maybe do not do it as well. I know people that work in hospitality as well, that is quite a difficult area, and self-employment as well, that is a difficult area. If you have got a client who is self-employed and she has to go back to work, or we have noticed that will go back almost immediately sometimes after having a baby, because there is no other option.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Can I just ask you a little bit extra on that, so this urgency to go back, do you think that is driven through people's own necessity to do that or is that anything to do with the fact that employers might be saying, or might not be saying to people what entitlements and benefits they are able to access?

Senior Coordinator, Brighter Futures:

Again, it depends on what your HR is and where you work. I think some places are really great, HR is really good and they sit them down and talk to them about what they are entitled to, and how that is going to work for them, what that is going to look like. But not everybody has that luxury of having people that are there looking out for them, and they have to do it themselves. I think people who work in shops and food places, they have got it quite well that you can go back on phased return, you can take a year off if you want to. There is some really good success stories there from people who are working in that industry. But, again, you get the gap, the people who are doing it really well, and then the mums who has been off for 3 weeks and has to go back to work because she is self-employed and financially she cannot manage.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

So there is an issue for self-employed people. Are there any other industry areas you think that are not doing as well as perhaps some of the other industry areas?

Trusts and Grants Manager, Brighter Futures:

I think hospitality is one of them. I have heard of a few things that come back, because obviously we do story captures and whatever, where the mum and dad, he has had to change his role because the childcare was too expensive for them, because they are both in hospitality. So he has changed his job. He has left his current place, and he has gone into another different area where he works evenings only, so they are doing tag team. So mum would work during the day, she works in

hospitality. So she will work during the day and then come back, tag, and off he goes, and then they will both come back. So he works 6 days a week, she works Monday to Friday, 9.00 to 5.00, and they have a Sunday together. But sometimes he has to work a Sunday as well, so it is not ideal.

Fundraising, Events and Partnerships Manager, Brighter Futures:

But it is also with self-employment. I mean, my missus, she is self-employed, and we had to cut off maternity, holidays, just to make sure that the income is still there. So we have no idea that we can have so many benefits. We understand that it is there, but we do not have all the access.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Yes. Thank you. I just want to clarify one of the answers. So you mentioned that there are Islanders living in poverty because they do not understand there are things they are entitled to. So this, on 2020, the 6 weeks paid, plus there is 18 weeks of Social Security payments, so are there Islanders who are not accessing those and are not receiving those just because they are not aware of it?

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

We did a piece recently around families living in poverty for the Decent Standing Living Panel that is obviously part of the Best Start Partnership. Part of that was collating some evidence around families in Jersey, particularly families that are accessing Brighter Futures that are living in poverty. We have got stories of families asking for honey to put on rice because they are living off rice and things like that, because obviously they are living in poverty. We did have one mum that was pregnant, and she was not aware of anything that she was basically entitled to. Now, whether or not there was that language barrier there, however even things like the vouchers for fruit and things like that, her benefits, all these things that we had to support her with. So it was okay in the end, but we were having to signpost her and support her with that. So, yes, we do see on a regular basis, and part of that is, because we are not also experts on this, we are the experts in supporting the family the best way we can. So that is why people like Louise, we physically take our families, that sounds awful, in a nice way, we take our families down to speak to those experts to get exactly what they are entitled to. Often, they were absolutely not aware of what they could be getting.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

That sounds really serious, really serious impacts of not knowing that these laws exist.

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

Not understanding, yes.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Thank you. Can I just ask a follow up question to that? Do you think, in terms of the pathway arrangements now that you have got in place, that you will start to see less and less of that?

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

We hope so with the perinatal pathway. Because we are getting families in at the point of 13-14 weeks of being pregnant, and we are having those conversations all the time. It is a big worry that comes up, I wish we had our perinatal lead, because this is very much her kind of bag. But it is a big concern for lots of pregnant mums in Jersey about the access to funds. How am I going to be able to put a child in nursery? How am I going to be able to feed the family? How am I ...? It is a huge talking point and it is a big point that our perinatal lead discusses in one-to-ones all the time. That is a big job that she does. She takes families down to make sure that they are getting what they are entitled to because even a couple of hundred pounds is huge for some families. That is their food for that month. So that is definitely something that we hope that we see a lot less of, having these conversations early and catching families at that early point. We are in a really lucky position where lots of our families do share their financial difficulties. I think, going back on what Sarah said, where sometimes there is that kind of shame associated with it, but we are in a really privileged position where our families often do share their financial hardships and things with us. That is why we are able to support them and signpost them to the best place to do that.

Deputy Manager, Brighter Futures:

I think it is just expensive in Jersey.

Ambassador, Brighter Futures:

I also just think, if you do not mind me finishing off on that point, is that a lot of the families we deal with, who, for example, might be involved in child protection matters, they are very cautious of what they see as another arm of Government. Sometimes there has not always been a positive relationship because of interactions with the family and that feeling of cautiousness and fear can extend to other elements. So I think we might have got that as a barrier. I have seen that maybe on a few occasions.

[14:30]

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

It is great to hear the family feeling and I think that is a real strength of your charity, is it not? Thank you.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Just to pick up on what you said about people being self-employed, is it fair to say that you would describe those who are self-employed, is it a barrier to them accessing their maternity or parental leave rights, do you feel?

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So, if you are self-employed, you do not get that. Obviously, if you are with an employer, you get your 6 weeks at full pay. But if you are self-employed, you do not get that, you just get the 18 weeks.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

That is dependent on your Social Security contributions as well, your entitlement. So I wonder, do you come across people who do have gaps in contributions as well, which means they are entitled to less? Is that something you have seen?

Fundraising, Events and Partnerships Manager, Brighter Futures:

Yes, with my missus. So we had our daughter, she will be 3 in September. Last year, she stopped paying contributions. It is just because it was either 640 quid or nothing. Unfortunately, we could not afford that. So now we are having a second child, we have been told that she is not entitled to any sort of paternity. So then I have to cover that. So that was one of the ...

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Do you mind me asking, do you feel like you had all the information, you knew that would be the case?

Fundraising, Events and Partnerships Manager, Brighter Futures:

Yes, so we have been informed that we might lose some allowances, for example, pension. I will be very honest, I do not know if it was mentioned maternity, but this is what happened. So definitely, we knew about pension, 100 per cent we knew about pension.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

We appreciate your input as well. What kind of impacts does that have, either in your situation, or if you could speak for any of your clients, or if you wanted to speak? I do not know if you have experience of being self-employed.

Fundraising, Events and Partnerships Manager, Brighter Futures:

I think I can cover most of the stories that we have here, because, although I have been only one year with Brighter Futures, I have been in so many situations. For example, English is not my first language. Close family, I do not have any close family here in Jersey. So for the first time we had to bring my mother-in-law here when we had our daughter. So my mother-in-law, she was here for

almost a year. Without her, we could not sustain 2023, 2024, and going forward. So, yes, that was a huge impact. My previous job, I preferred to be on paternity, and my missus to do a full-time job, because at that time she was earning way more than me. Now with both children, we are really struggling as a full-time nursery, it is 1,750 quid, a full-time nursery. So for both children, now going both in September, just because my daughter misses for 8 days, misses the cut-off.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

That 1,700, is that for 2 children?

Fundraising, Events and Partnerships Manager, Brighter Futures:

For one.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

For one child.

Fundraising, Events and Partnerships Manager, Brighter Futures:

So our expenses from September goes almost £8,000 per month, 2 nurseries, rent 1,800, plus at least £2,000 utilities, and providing the grocery, the food, essentials in the family. Luckily enough, I have a very good job. Not a very good job, but a decent job at Brighter Futures. So, yes, other than that, and I spoke with our C.E.O. (Chief Executive Officer), and I will have to take a part-time job on Fridays and Saturdays, hopefully.

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

I do not know if it is a good time, we have increased conversations with our families about the fact that they have got one child and they would not be able to have 2 or 3 and they are conversations we have quite regularly of whether they carry on with pregnancies and things like that. That is something that we are seeing a lot more of now than we have done before, just because of the cost, and that is a lot of families' conversations. You even see it in the baby group and things, it is almost like a talking point now, how are they sleeping, would you be able to have another one? Things like that, which I do not feel like we saw as much of before.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

The families are wanting to have more children, but they are telling you that they feel they cannot.

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

Yes, I think so, and I would say, correct me if I am wrong, that it is predominantly families that are not receiving any kind of income support or any benefits. That is more families that potentially would

own their own property and things like that and that would be a really, really big financial implication having another child. So lots of families having one child now.

Senior Coordinator, Brighter Futures:

Or be in a situation where they have had to think about whether they continue with their second pregnancy because of the financial situation that they are in. That is a homeowner who has a job and her husband is working. That is not somebody who is accessing Income Support; that is somebody who is working really hard and still could not consider having another child because of financial implications.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

What kind of impact does that have on that individual when they want to have that baby and they feel they have to have a termination because they cannot afford to have the child? What kind of impact does that have?

Senior Coordinator, Brighter Futures:

Yes, because it is over £3,000 a month just for a nursery space for 2 children. It is a lot of money if you are a homeowner and you have your mortgage to pay and your other outgoings as well, and your job is not a top-high job, it is just getting you by.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

I suppose what you are describing is short-term impacts in terms of trying to manage from one day to the next. But you have just talked about termination of pregnancy there and that is a really critical decision for most people to make, so there are longer-term impacts as well. Do you feel that there are people who just cannot get their head above the water around some of the conditions of employment or how this legislation perhaps is not working for them?

Ambassador, Brighter Futures:

Yes, I think that we deal with a huge cross-section of people at Brighter Futures but inevitably a lot of our clients are very vulnerable. I know that we are approached, especially as a charity, to help with those vulnerabilities, for example the high-level need families. I think another thing that we see a lot of, I know that there are parents who are not eating so their children can eat from working at Brighter Futures. It is not an urban myth. We know that from the bags of food that we give away. We know that from the fact that our larder can be empty as well. We know that Margret is very good at spinning out the vouchers, but we only have a finite amount of vouchers, but we want to give our clients vouchers so that there is the dignity of choice in the supermarket, like we would all want. But I do not want to keep coming back to hardship and poverty, but I feel it is, and I feel that when something happens to someone in Jersey, because of that infinite cost of living, it becomes a cluster,

and luckily with Brighter Futures doing this work and other charities, we can buoy people up. But there are some very concerning things that we know happen or do not happen. People cannot look after themselves because of other costs and that will have an impact.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Okay, thank you. We might come back to some of these themes. Some of that is quite devastating to hear and I can only apologise to the people that you support that there are situations like that occurring. I would like to ask about fathers and whether there are different experiences that perhaps mothers and fathers are having. Would you like to start?

Fundraising, Events and Partnerships Manager, Brighter Futures:

Yes, so for quite a few years now, we have our Dads Club, which is every Sunday of the month. Lately, I joined just to get the experience and to understand exactly, I join most of the programmes throughout the year now, just for me to understand how Brighter Futures works and for me to make sure that we have enough fundraising. Yes, paternity leave is a hot topic between dads as well, and not all of them have access to the full information. First, language barrier, not having families close and not having somebody appropriate to guide them, exactly like it happens with mums, somebody to take them: "Okay, you come with us and then we will make sure that somebody will explain to you". Also, maybe it is a little bit of manly proudness, be proud of a man.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

There is a stigma, do you feel that fathers are maybe encouraged to not take that leave or they feel like they cannot because of how our culture views fathers?

Fundraising, Events and Partnerships Manager, Brighter Futures:

Well, I have not taken all the parts, all the advice or anything. For example, I had no idea that we can take 52 weeks of paternity leave until now when I have seen it on the screen this morning.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So, for the record, it is completely equal, something that I campaigned for very hard myself, and I know that it was supported by the Assembly. What I would like to see is mothers and fathers being able to access that. But the fathers that come to Brighter Futures, do you feel that they are aware of the fact that it is equal? We have just heard that you were not aware, Marcel. Are all the fathers aware that it is equal?

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

I think it is a bit like a hot topic, Dads Club and things like that, and then discussing it, and it is almost like them learning from each other and what each other do and things like that, rather than them

maybe being shared that by their employer. I would suggest that is what we can see in the Dads Club. I was speaking to a dad recently, and he said that his employer was really, really good and sat down and goes: "It could look like this, and it could look like that, and it could look like that", which is great, because that is what you want, and you want that choice, you want those options. But obviously that has just being from one employer. I think it is almost talking to each other and seeing what friends do and things like that, but that is if you do have that social network, I suppose, rather than just always learning what they can do from their employer.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Yes. In terms of employers, are there any differences in how employers are treating dads and mums that anybody has observed?

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

I think we have got quite a lot of clients that mum and dad both work in food retail, like food shops in Jersey. They seem to be really, really happy with the response from their employers being really helpful that they have got maybe mum and dad both working and being able to support them. So that is something that I would share is that we do have some really nice kind of experiences from some of our families in those areas in particular.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

It is good to hear positive.

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

Yes, yes, I think they do. They seem to be really happy with how they are working. We have got a mum at the moment as well that her little one is starting school and she is moving to be closer to moving her food shop to be closer to where her little one starts school and things like that. So I think they seem to be quite flexible and get that, because I think that was another point that comes out with our families is, when they approach about changing their hours, when they are maybe going back after maternity leave and requesting some flexible working hours, I think it is not always timely and I think that causes quite a lot of strain and pressure on a family, because they are not always told in quite a timely manner. So it is almost trying to organise nursery, organise childcare and things around the unknown. So I think that is definitely something that has come out and there is a theme as well with families that are doing those requests, that it is not coming back to them in a timely manner for them to be able to I suppose get all their ducks in a row.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

A final one on this, the dads section, what do you think we could do to encourage more dads to feel that they can use the leave and to access greater periods of leave?

Trusts and Grants Manager, Brighter Futures:

I suppose break down stigma. I suppose that would be the biggest thing. I think different industries, just going from the reporting side of things, it is the different industries have got different sort of stigmas, if you know what I mean. So depending on who is around them, if you have got a male workforce, then it is going to be different to a mixed sort of workforce, I think. That is just down to knowledge as well. Having a father that has not got a connection with the child, I think that is a huge thing and that is not good as well. That well-being sort of thing, you can see fathers that just do not get that connection with the child because they just have not had that time, but they are very scared as well of: "How do I connect?"

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

That brings us nicely on to the next question.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

Yes, so since the amount of paid parental leave has been increased, have you seen changes in outcomes in terms of the child development among the cohort that you see at Brighter Futures, and also their bonding and attachment with their own parents?

Deputy Manager, Brighter Futures:

I do not know if we have that perspective, but I think, as Marcel said, because we have got quite a few dads, whether they are on paternity leave, I am not sure.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Dads is 2 weeks, so it was increased to 2 weeks for fathers and then 6 weeks, so it was quite a rapid increase, was it not, a 3-fold increase?

Fundraising, Events and Partnerships Manager, Brighter Futures:

From experience, you can see I have noticed and we have cases that, for example, my niece, when she was 6-7 years old, she only knew that her father goes, brings home the money, so that they can live. But then now with the increase of 32 weeks, we can see that fathers are more, I will take another 2 weeks, I will take another 4 weeks or 6 weeks, or I prefer to change hospitality to a different career in order for me to stay with my children.

[14:45]

So, just to make sure that I am there for my daughter, as I have seen in the past, there was not a possibility and I could see men taking, not only the full-time job, but then having 2-3 other part-time jobs, just to make sure that they can provide for their families.

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

To answer your question, I do not know whether we would particularly know whether families are taking longer off, I suppose, but obviously for us our numbers keep increasing, so maybe that is like a telltale sign that people are using their full allowance. A massive part of what we do is based around those family, child and parent interactions and attachment and we know that catching that early and having those bonds early, obviously it is lifelong for those children. So that is obviously a huge part of what Brighter Futures do. I cannot answer whether or not we have seen a huge increase in that, but obviously that is something Brighter Futures obviously support families with every day on that kind of parent and child attachment, and then the child development comes, and things, because we are encouraging that reading and we are encouraging that social interaction things at a young age.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I am just going to do a time check. We have got about just over 10 minutes left, so we might need to edit some of our questions and maybe make the answers a little bit briefer. It is all really interesting what you are saying.

Deputy K.L. Moore:

So you have clearly expressed today that many people do not know what their statutory parental leave rights are. But is there any view that you have formed perhaps as an organisation as to what the ideal amount of time for statutory parental leave would be?

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So that would be the paid amount of leave?

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

I think it is different.

Deputy Manager, Brighter Futures:

For me, I feel that to be a family-friendly Island, it would be better if it was longer. I think families should be allowed to be families. I feel that having a baby and going to work for anyone for 6 weeks, it is tiny. If you are breastfeeding this little one, it is going to shorten that breastfeeding unless you express and things like that. But I just feel that a baby is so tiny and those first 3 years of a little one's life are so important, and if families can and want to do it, I think it would be nice to have that

opportunity to do it. I feel that it would just make it more a family-friendly Island. I think the cost probably may put people off from taking it because I think a lot of people may rush back to work because of the costs in Jersey, whether it be a mortgage or rent or whatever. I think maybe both parents do not take the time off again because of the cost and so, although it is great having that time, I do not really know any families that I know that have taken all of that time off together, and it would be lovely to be able to do it. But I would not know anyone that has done it.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

I will pass back to you, Chair. Thank you.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So even though there is in theory 2 years shared between the parents, not many families are accessing that.

Deputy Manager, Brighter Futures:

I would not. I do not know of any, I would not know that a lot of people would take it off. I think the cost of living in Jersey probably restricts people from taking it.

Current Client of Brighter Futures:

Like, you have got the option, but then still you have to weigh up everything else that you have outgoing like your rent, your mortgage, food, and then a nursery, and to weigh it up, either one of you are going to stay at home. Then what happens after that? What happens after those 52 weeks? Because children grow and they need you for longer than that. So then what happens? Does one of you just stay at home for ever until that child goes to school, and you look and you think how expensive nurseries are, and after-school clubs are just so expensive. Private nanny care is just as expensive. So what do you do? Do you give up your career as a father or a mother to then raise your children, or do you bite the bullet to pay out? That is the tough part. It does not just stop at 52 weeks. It carries on. It does not just stop at nursery. It carries on as the children grow older, summer holidays, and we go back to talk about breakfast clubs and we go back to talk about Brighter Futures. Then also anxiety. I came to Brighter Futures as a mum navigating a second pregnancy and the anxiety I had was crippling. I navigated it in my first pregnancy, and the place saved me, it really did. Still, now, like we go weekly and we look forward to it. The classes are small and we meet so many different people. I could not imagine leaving when the time comes. But everything is expensive, but you have to think whether you go back or whether you do not have a career.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Can I just explore some more of that with you? So the amount of paid leave is 6 weeks at the moment. So what you are saying is you do not think that that support basically supports families' living costs in Jersey?

Former Client of Brighter Futures:

No, not at all, the 6 weeks is still seen as an income by Social Security. So that income that you are getting for those 6 weeks probably does not even cover your rent, especially if you are not lucky enough to be a Jersey resident and able to get that extra support, like other people, families that come into Brighter Futures, they rely on working to cover their rent and stuff like that.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

So do you think that the 52 weeks of leave that is given for parents ...

Former Client of Brighter Futures:

I do not think people will take it.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

But 6 weeks of that is paid at 100 per cent by the employer. So what you are saying is that that is not helpful in terms of the way that is organised. But the thing is that you can take that leave in blocks. Do you think that is working for people at all?

Former Client of Brighter Futures:

It depends on the family, does it not it? Every family has got a different situation.

Current Client of Brighter Futures:

I think, as great as it is, like we hear it in groups, we hear it as Marcel was just saying, people are out there going to get second jobs. People are looking for weekend work because the money they are bringing in monthly is just not meeting their needs.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

So, in terms of the parental allowance, which is £283.01 per week, that is per week for a maximum of 32 weeks. Again, you do not think that is sufficient to maintain some of the living costs?

Former Client of Brighter Futures:

It depends on how many children you have got.

Fundraising, Events and Partnerships Manager, Brighter Futures:

To put it in perspective, so for 4 weeks, that is over £1,200. Talking from my point of view, our rent is £1,800. If my missus would have been in maternity, we would lose at least £3,500 per month just for her to be in maternity. So we could not afford to pay the rent. We paid the nursery for our daughter, but we could not afford to pay the rent.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

The tax-free parental grant, do people access that, because that is a tax-free payment as well?

Current Client of Brighter Futures:

I accessed that, yes. It was very, very positive, it was brilliant. When we talk about the 52 weeks, and it was great, I have a very good job, but when I went on maternity leave I was losing the extra payments that I would be getting for working at the weekend, for working at night time, and so you have to go back.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

So it is the difference.

Current Client of Brighter Futures:

Absolutely, because there is nobody picking up that shortfall.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Are you aware of any ...

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

Is that the £800? Yes, all our families do, yes, we do encourage all our families.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Do you mind me just digging into that slightly as well? How do you find people spend that payment, because the payment traditionally, it was your pram money, for example, you still get charged at a G.P. (general practitioner), you get charged something like £120 for your care in pregnancy, and then when you question it they say: "Oh, well, you get your £800 payment, so that helps to cover that". Do you feel like people are using it to buy prams and cover those payments, or is it to keep heads above water?

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

We are very lucky at Brighter Futures that we get a lot of donations, so something when our pregnant mums come in, or any client comes in, we always have a conversation around if they are in financial hardship, and often prams are something that we do try to get for them, and so we often get donated

and things like that, and we get approached by the public for their prams and baby basics, obviously has been a massive support for pregnant mums. But prams is definitely something, and someone will use it, and we often get them back from clients as well, which is really lovely. So I would not say so much that it is getting used for prams. I would not know what it is, sorry, getting used for, but I imagine just daily living.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Can I just come back to the issue about how people access support? Are you aware of any families that are accessing Income Support to help them take longer periods away from work to care for a child?

Senior Coordinator, Brighter Futures:

Over the 52 weeks?

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Yes. So, families maybe who were not accessing Income Support, but then might need to once they have a child?

Former Client of Brighter Futures:

Yes. I have been on Income Support since I had my second. I did not have the choice to go back to work because I worked for a U.K. (United Kingdom) company, and they would not support me to go back part-time.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

So the conditions of work would not allow you to do that?

Former Client of Brighter Futures:

There was not a place back for me after I left work, so I worked up to 2 weeks due with Lily, and then obviously I was going to go back when she went to nursery, but I fell pregnant again, and I have not been back to work since.

Deputy K.M. Wilson:

Do you think there are any families experiencing financial hardship because of the level of paid leave available to them?

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Do you think we have probably covered that? We have established that there is. Can I just come in, I wanted to reflect back on this line of questioning that Karen's got around the finances, and

somebody mentioned maybe families who are paying a mortgage, and sometimes we call that Middle Jersey, and they would not be able to access Income Support if they had a mortgage. So, do you see any differences in the hardship experienced by those kinds of families?

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

Yes, Christmas was a big time where we noticed it a lot more, with clients that potentially dad is working and mum is off work on maternity, and they own their own home, and they were the ones that could not afford Christmas. They were the families that were really, really struggling over Christmas. So, lots of our families do struggle during Christmas time, but we saw a real big increase this year and we noted it this year, was that lots of the families that are not entitled to Income Support presented to us that they were really, really struggling over Christmas time, the ones that potentially were not going to be having the Christmas dinner, the traditional Christmas dinner and things like that, because of the cost of it, and we were supporting them with presents for their little ones and things like that over Christmas time. So, yes, I think the challenges are similar, really, but I think we have seen a big increase in families struggling with that.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Thank you. We are going to have to triage our questions a bit, because we have only got 3 minutes left. Lucy, do you want to say something?

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

We did cover child development, and I think it was quite a clear message that it is the leave, and the time for bonding for both parents is really important. Is that a fair summary?

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

Yes, yes.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

And the other thing, do you see it also in similar terms for parents' mental health and stress levels as well?

Former Client of Brighter Futures:

100 per cent.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

And if they have got that space to take the leave, do you think that is a positive thing as well?

Deputy Manager, Brighter Futures:

I think so, and be with other, I am going to say mothers or fathers, I just feel as if it would feel more comfortable if you were able to be off with other people, and like: "My little one is crying", "Oh, my little one ...". Just to get that, especially being a first-time mum or a first-time dad, it is quite daunting, and especially with no other people around it is nice to know that everyone's baby cries and the little milestones that you are there for, and I feel that the opportunity to be able to be off with your little ones is really, really important, massively.

Deputy L.K.F. Stephenson:

Would you say that navigating the Employment Law and what may or may not be in it, and worrying about it, is that a source of stress for the families that you see, do you think?

Trusts and Grants Manager, Brighter Futures:

I think sometimes you can look at a piece of paper and just see a load of words, and it is very, very daunting, just trailing your way through all the information to try to get the bit that you want. I think that is why Brighter Futures works as well, is because people can come and literally ask the question and get the answer, rather than going: "I cannot even look at that, I cannot even, all of that information is just too much".

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Can I pick up on that, if other services were able to do that kind of explaining part for you, would that free you up to do some of the more in-depth work that you do, the supporting work, if the communicating part of it was covered more adequately, would that free you up?

[15:00]

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

I just think we have got that relationship with families. I think they share things with us, and they might share things with other agencies, we do not know, but I think, and like I said before, we are in a really good position where they do open up and they do share things and they do express their worries and what is going well and not well, and things like that. So I would not have thought so, because I do not know whether they would, I do not know. They share with us, and I think that is really positive.

Former Client of Brighter Futures:

There is more trust with Brighter Futures, 100 per cent more trust. Before I went to Brighter Futures, I was under Social Services. What I had with Social Services, I would not want that again, and I would not like to see any other family go through it, but what I had with Brighter Futures was completely different.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So people prefer to go straight to Brighter Futures.

Former Client of Brighter Futures:

100 per cent, it was more opening, you had trust there, you know that you were going to get looked after, your child was going to get looked after, you were not feeling like you put one foot wrong, your child was going to get taken away from you.

Ambassador, Brighter Futures:

I think it is exactly that, Sam, we are a trusted advisor, are we not, and you know, if you come to us for something, you are going to want to come to us for another, and thank you for sharing that, and it is something we do see. Thank you.

Current Client of Brighter Futures:

Also, just to add to that, we start the process, so we open ourselves up to our care coordinator in a very vulnerable time of ourselves, and we grow that, and we grow together, like we go to a group called Grow Together and it literally is we grow together, because the process that we start is not the process where we end up. We end up with such a better place than we ever were originally.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Thank you. So we are very near to the end of our time, so we are going to jump to the end section. Basically, what I would like to understand is, what final kind of improvements would you like to suggest to us? I want to ask about 2 specific areas, and then you can also tell us in a more general sense any improvements. So if you could reflect very briefly on grandparents, because I know that your charity sometimes supports grandparents, and anything that could be improved to support grandparents in the care that they are providing for very young children. Also, single parents, how things can be improved for them, and then any general comments. So start very briefly with grandparents. Does anyone want to comment on how services could be improved?

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

I think it is all agencies being aware and to be having those conversations, is it not? Because I do not think lots of our grandparents, they did not know about us, for example, so they did not know about that. I do not know ...

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Sorry, I think I need to just refocus my question. So specifically the legislation, would you change anything in this Law to make it better for grandparents? Would you make it more flexible? Would

you put something in there specifically targeted at grandparents? Would you allow it to be shared with grandparents? Is there anything, from what you have learned about the grandparents you support, that you would change about this Law?

Deputy Manager, Brighter Futures:

Do you mean for the grandparents to be off work too maybe? I do not have parents here, but you mean like they could be paid to be off?

Trusts and Grants Manager, Brighter Futures:

The care that we give to families, it is basically the main carer, it is the main parent carer, and I think that is maybe how you could change it. So instead of saying that it is a mum or a dad or a surrogate, maybe it should be the main carer. So you are circling it around, so whether it is grandparents, it is the main carer. So we get some families which the grandparents take care of the children because their child cannot physically look after them. So I suppose that is where, yes, it could change.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So you think grandparents should be able to maybe access some of this protected time so that they could take leave and go back to their job?

Trusts and Grants Manager, Brighter Futures:

Yes, if they are the main carer, definitely.

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

Yes, because we had a conversation recently about that kind of village raising the child, and they do not feel like that is happening as much now. Some said obviously it is because their parents are having to work until they are a lot older, so they are not able to be off and to be able to support that. Those grandparents are so important for that whole family and I suppose that attachment and that bond from such a young age. So I am just speaking for myself, but I am speaking and hearing from them, that was a conversation recently we had. So if that could be shared between, yes, grandparents, aunties, uncles, whoever it could be, yes.

Trusts and Grants Manager, Brighter Futures:

The single parents as well, definitely.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Yes. If you have any brief comment about single parents and how this could be improved for single parents?

Trusts and Grants Manager, Brighter Futures:

Well, I suppose they are just juggling on their own, are they not? Possibly even more so, because they cannot rely on somebody else to go along the journey with them. So, yes, I do not know how you do that.

Deputy Manager, Brighter Futures:

Sometimes I think for single parents, they would be over the bracket of receiving Income Support. So that is really, really difficult, one person working on their own to, to pay a nursery, it is just quite impossible. You end up with nothing, you are paying rent, especially if you have only come over to the Island, you are paying rent, you are paying a nursery, and you are trying to juggle work. There is nothing left at all.

Trusts and Grants Manager, Brighter Futures:

Leaving the Island because of it.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

So people are leaving because the Law is inadequate.

Trusts and Grants Manager, Brighter Futures:

Yes. They have to go back to their home place, so they have got the family, which is surrounding them, because they cannot physically stay there.

Ambassador, Brighter Futures:

That is something we measure as well in our annual report, is it not, Jude, we do measure that, if a client does not finish their journey with us, often a reason for that is that they took that economic decision and we record it because it is something that is coming through to us. It is a piece of evidence.

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

Obviously just thinking about single dads as well, because we work with single dads, I think it is almost like the kind of community and society thing of, you go into a restroom and often the baby changing mats are in the women's toilets and things like that. So I think often, I know it is about the stigma kind of thing, but often there is not a baby changing area maybe in a male's toilet and things like that. So it is almost that society feel that it should be my wife that is off because there is the baby changing area or whatever, so I think it is almost a kind of whole community shift, is it not, I suppose.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Okay, thank you. Are there any final improvements that maybe you have not had time to suggest? Maybe in quick 30 seconds, quick fire round, if anybody wants to say specifically to this legislation.

Trusts and Grants Manager, Brighter Futures:

Yes, yes. I suppose going back to sort of knowing what you are entitled to and the reason why Brighter Futures works is obviously you have got that one-to-one key worker support and it is not chatbot. It is a person and it is having a conversation and it is getting an answer back, not getting the answer that has absolutely no relevance to it. I think they have got a place, chatbots, but possibly not when you are looking for that sort of support.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

It is a more face-to-face support with understanding. Thank you.

Fundraising, Events and Partnerships Manager, Brighter Futures:

Sometimes you want a more plain and simple wording, instead of giving a complex: "This is the law and such and such". "Yes, we can do", or: "No, we cannot do it", will help way more.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Thank you. Samantha, what would you change about this Law?

Former Client of Brighter Futures:

I would probably say more personal experience with it, like we get from Brighter Futures. One-to-one personal experience.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Yes, so more support with this time of life. Kerry, is there anything you would change about this law, about the parental leave?

Current Client of Brighter Futures:

So I think that just not everybody fits the one box, like think outside of the box, because one story is not the same, we are not all the same. My struggles are going to be different to Sam's struggles. Everything changes. The struggle that I have got this week might not be the struggle I have got in 6 months' time.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

That is very powerful. Thank you.

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

I am just thinking, is there this piece that goes in the maternity packs about what you are entitled to, like you can go to your all your antenatal appointments, your partner can get time?

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

We can certainly check that when we question the Minister; we can ask the Minister that.

Operations Manager, Brighter Futures:

Yes. Because I think predominantly the people that know that they can go to these are Government workers, so obviously they are shared that and they are told that. So, I think if it was printed and I read it that my partner could get 10 hours and things like that, I think you are not always going to catch everybody that would read it, but I think that might be a good place to start.

Fundraising, Events and Partnerships Manager, Brighter Futures:

I can support that, Lauren. We have not seen anything, especially with the second one, we took every leaflet and we checked almost everything and we have not seen all the like the detail you have there.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

We will follow up on that, thank you. Yes, thank you, Margaret, what would you like to change about this Law?

Deputy Manager, Brighter Futures:

I think maybe more than 6 weeks because I really think ...

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Be bold, please.

Deputy Manager, Brighter Futures:

I think the 1,001 critical days is so important. It is just the time when the little one's brain is developing and I think they need the care of mum or dad or both. I just think we need to be a more family-friendly place, just to nurture our little ones and to be with them and just to be a family. I just feel there is so many people, I think you said it, Lauren, where people are tag-teaming literally and it quite sad. I did do coordinator work, it is like: "When do you see your husband?" I have said that, and it just makes me feel so sad. I think it is a really, really difficult place to work. It is a lovely Island, but I think it is really, really difficult for families.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Thank you. Louise, what would you change about this Law?

Senior Coordinator, Brighter Futures:

I would say combining the existing support so that it is accessible to the family's wider support network. I know I have definitely worked with a client who would benefit from being allowed to share that parental leave with a parent because she has got additional needs herself and has not been able to return back to work just after she had her baby. So she has had to move in and live with her parents who have taken over the responsibility of her children, but do not get any kind of support with that. So mum and dad have had to take time off their employment to support their daughter. So I would definitely like to see that grandparents are included in that as well.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Thank you. Final words.

Ambassador, Brighter Futures:

For me it would just be that people have the knowledge and confidence about that right to request flexible working and for people who need to ask that question not to feel vilified and to feel like that is a right that they have and that should be reasonably considered by the employer. If you can get that piece of information out to more employees, whether they are parents, they have got other caring responsibilities, I think that would be a really helpful narrative. May I just say thank you all for this opportunity on behalf of Brighter Futures.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Any final comments or questions? Thank you. I am sorry that we have gone over time, but we just had so many questions for you and everything that you have said to us, every single sentence that has been uttered today is going to be so valuable for the review and will help to inform the recommendations that we make. I just wanted to comment on something that came up once or twice, the feelings of loneliness that parents have. I think you mentioned more than once feelings of shame. I wanted just to emphasise how important it is and what an important job being a parent is to our Island. Our birth rate is falling, which is one of the reasons that we have initiated this review. We, on this panel, would not want anybody to feel any shame, but to feel pride around being a parent and being a parent in Jersey. That is something that I would like to pass on to your charity and the people that you are working with. So thank you very much for your time today. Thank you.

[15:12]