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Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Proposed Budget 2027-2030

Witness: The Minister for Children and Families

Wednesday, 28th October 2026

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Panel:

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

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

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

Connétable T. Palmer of St. Lawrence

Witnesses:

Connétable R.P. Vibert of St. Peter, The Minister for Children and Families

Deputy M.R. Ferey of St. Saviour, Assistant Minister for Children and Families

Ms. D. Marriott, Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker

Ms. A. Tracey, Programme Director, Children's Improvement Programme

Mr. M. Capern, Associate Director, Young People's Services

Ms. K. Silcock, Finance Business Partner

[14:00]

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

Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome. This is the public hearing of the Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel as part of our review of the Proposed Budget 2027-2030. Today is Wednesday, 28th October, and our witness is the Minister for Children and Families. I am Victoria

Li, Deputy for St. Helier North, and I am the chair for this panel. Before we begin, a few housekeeping points. This hearing is being filmed and streamed live and the recording and the transcript will be published on the States Assembly website. Please make sure all the mobile phones and other devices are switched to silent. Any members of the public, whether - no one is in the room - watching online are very welcome. For the recording and the transcript, please state your name and roles, and the first time when you speak, and stay close to the microphone. I would like to ask our panel colleagues to introduce themselves, followed by the Minister and Assistant Minister and the officers. We have also received apologies from Connétable Curtis of St. Saviour, who is unable to join us today. If any Members has an interest to declare, please do so when you introduce yourself.

Connétable M.A. Labey of Grouville (Vice-Chair):
My name is Mark Labey, Connétable of Grouville, and I am the vice-chair of this panel.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine of St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter:
I am Chris Rebindaine, Deputy for St. Mary, St. Ouen and St. Peter, and member of the panel.

Connétable T. Palmer of St. Lawrence:
I am Tina Palmer, Constable for St. Lawrence.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Constable of St. Peter, Richard Vibert, Minister for Children and Families.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
Deputy Malcolm Ferey, Assistant Minister for Children and Families.

Finance Business Partner:
Kimberley Silcock, Finance Business Partner.

Associate Director, Young People's Services:
Mark Capern, Associate Director for Young People's Services with responsibility for the Youth Service.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Donna Marriott, Director of Children's Services and Chief Social Worker.

Programme Director, Children's Improvement Programme:
Angela Tracey, Programme Director for the Children's Improvement Programme.

Deputy V. Li:

Thank you, and thank you, Minister. First of all, thank you so much for the letters that you have sent to us on 19th October; we found that was very helpful in preparing for today. As I mentioned at our first hearing in September, this panel's interest is always in the outcomes for the children. So today is going to be quite straightforward, we want to follow the Budget through to what it achieves for the children, not just what the department does but what the difference is it makes to the children. So where the answers need to have more details, we would appreciate you to come back to us in writing. Minister, can we get started?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

Deputy V. Li:

Thank you. The first question is: are you on track right now to stay within this year's budget?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, we are certainly on track at the moment with this year's budget. We have made savings in some areas, that is partly due to the delay in being able to implement some of the residential reforms. But negotiations towards the full implementation of that are ongoing, and hopefully that will be resolved, nevertheless it has resulted in some savings. Areas like C.A.M.H.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services), I think we have used some money from those savings to, in effect, do further work in C.A.M.H.S. and look at the waiting times in neurodiversity. There was a backlog due to the ... well, we call it the COVID spike, but we are not quite sure now that it is a COVID spike because by now we would have expected that to work through. It has not. Strangely enough, when I was in Australia, I asked what has happened in their jurisdiction, and exactly the same. They have not seen that drop that they expected after that. So, although the spike was worldwide, the continuation through without dropping appears to be consistent. I know research is looking at that. We have to wait and see what comes from that. But yes, we are on track. Perhaps, I do not know if Angela can ... on this year's budget, we are on track with some savings. Or Donna?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

Probably the only other just one big thing, I suppose, that ... or 2 things, I suppose, in the actual Budget this year will be, I think we have had quite a significant reduction on spend on our agency staff, as we were trying to do, so that is a good thing. It has substantially reduced spend in that area, and just some parts of the improvement plan is still onboarding, so we have not got all of the posts that came in the growth quite in place yet, but that work is progressing really, as we would

expect it to do and as we want it to. That means we have got a bit of an underspend in the growth in that area as well.

Deputy V. Li:
If the budget is not spent, what would you do with that?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
That will belong to the Government at the end of it, when we reconcile the end of the budget for the end of the year. It will go back to the Government for them to consider it in the round across the whole of the Government's budget overall.

Deputy V. Li:
Minister, this year's Budget, this new Budget, not this year's, asked the Assembly for around £59 million for Children and Families in 2027. In your own words, what will a child in our care or a family who needs support experience differently next year compared with this year?

The Minister for Children and Families:
One of the things that certainly children will experience is the reform in the residential estate. We will start to see the benefits of that flowing through. The fact is that we have not had the properties that children deserve, and we are striving to achieve that. We have got 7 homes currently, all together. In 4 years' time we will still have 7 homes, but the number of beds will increase from 16 to, I believe, 27. We will start to see our ability to improve, to bring children in earlier, so early intervention, which is a major benefit at the moment. The lack of beds prevents us, in certain cases, from doing that. Then we have got the St. Helier Youth Centre. That is going to improve children's lives tremendously in that area. There is no youth facility in St. Helier at the moment. That increases activity for children. There is an element of increased play area as well. You have also got the benefits of the Y.E.S. (Youth Enquiry Service) project moving in with them. So that is supporting children, children who might not ... without a facility there, I think it is quite difficult for some children to come forward and express the problems that they might have. So all that will change with the new setting. It will take some time for those children to feel that they are able to come forward, but I think we will see significant benefits from that. Then there is our ongoing work anyway in supporting children. We are always looking for the best outcome for children. There will be support for all the areas, the Youth Service, fostering, the support areas within Children's Services itself. So all around we are improving the wraparound support for our children.

Deputy V. Li:
What are the 3 most important outcomes that you expect this Budget to deliver?

The Minister for Children and Families:
I suppose part of that I have covered already. I think the best outcome is the improvement in general for children. I think we have to strive for the best possible outcome for our children. We find this difficult to say what are the ...

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
The adolescents.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Do you want to cover that? The adolescents ...

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
The multidisciplinary service, that whole more proactive response to young people, adolescents, I think was not there. So the strengthening of that and the investment there we are already seeing quite a lot of benefits, are we not, I think, when you see the reduction in children going missing, an increase in safety we are seeing with some of those children, the more responsive approach that is reducing risk for them, we are starting to evidence that much better in some of our analytical work that we are doing now. You can see the children we have identified; where there are risks, those risks being reduced. I think that is quite a big piece of progress.

The Minister for Children and Families:
We have seen a fall in antisocial behaviour.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Yes, a reduction in some of the youth crime.

The Minister for Children and Families:
The missing children is an 80 per cent decrease ...

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
In care, yes.

The Minister for Children and Families:
... year-on-year. So that is significant, and it does show that the work we are doing is filtering through.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

The move to the new facility at Bermuda House for C.A.M.H.S. is a far better environment than was available before. So that is going to be, again, that early intervention, that proper support when children and young people need it. But it is the environment which is so important. It is on a quieter street, but the facilities there are first class. I visited it the other week when we got around to actually opening it officially. That is going to really improve the outcomes for our children and young people.

Deputy V. Li:

This question is more specifically to the director then. The Minister was mentioning about several important outcomes that he wished to see. How do we, as the panel, hold you to be accountable for ... are we looking at specific numbers? Or are we looking at a specific area? Because sometimes it is really hard to quantify it.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

I think the Children's Improvement Plan sets out quite clearly that there are those 3 big strands. One of them is about supporting families. That is all the part about early help and the work around that multidisciplinary offer and things like making sure that we have got the right help at the right time for families; that part. Then a second sort of big pillar of the plan is around Loving Homes, which is all the bits about needing to get more foster homes for families and more residential care and that quality of that improving. Then the third part is around the care and support, which is really about the quality of our intervention and our work with children in care and care leavers, and I suppose the Government's responsibility as corporate parents about what it needs to do to make sure it is meeting those children's needs. So that plan is made up of those 3 strands. There is quite a substantial improvement plan that sits underneath that, which has targets and measures attached, and lots of things about what we expect to see by outcome. Some of it will be about volume and numbers, like you are saying, that you could definitely measure us against. Some of it will be about quality, and that is because we audit all of the time in social work and we spend a lot of our time looking at progress for children and understanding practice. Then there will be a third part of that, which is about children's experiences and their views and their wishes. For example, we have just carried out a survey of children in care and care leavers. It was last done in 2023 and we have come back and done that again now to see what children and young people are telling us about their experiences and are things getting better? That plan, under the C.P.M.O. (Corporate Portfolio Management Office), which is the Government's programme approach that they use, the Government, corporately, hold us to account for that delivery of that, and it is reviewed centrally. They are making sure that we are, one, delivering against the money we have been given, and delivering that in the right way, and spending it in the right way. There is a lot of oversight of that. Then, secondly, that programme approach. We have to report in regularly, and it is overseen in central Government as well. So there is a lot of oversight, and that is separately to things like our inspection and our regulation, because we are inspected and regulated regularly. All our children's

homes are inspected. Some of those things, I think, would give you a bit of an insight as a panel to what we do, that we could evidence that for you. But maybe some of that would be, perhaps, to come and spend a little bit of time on seeing what happens in the service and understanding how some of those things happen might be helpful for you as well.

The Minister for Children and Families:
So your early health plans, the closure of the early health plans, were the goals achieved?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Yes.

The Minister for Children and Families:
I mean, you did all that and that is a good measure of progress.

[14:15]

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
We will have a lot of indicators built into social care, because it is very regulated in England. So we follow quite a lot of similar things. We benchmark against some of the English averages around most areas of practice, whether that is the number of referrals, assessments, plans, reviews, all of that is quite heavily performance-managed, as well as quality.

Deputy V. Li:
You mentioned about the benchmarking. Can you tell me about which data that you are using to benchmark?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
There will be probably hundreds and hundreds of different areas that we benchmark against, whether it is from the moment, perhaps there is a contact into the service and the timeliness which it is dealt with, the timeliness we make the decision about that becoming a referral.

Deputy V. Li:
Being like, which city or which ...?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
So we go across the south. There is a south-east comparator ... in England, they break up local authorities into groups, and we sit with a south-east benchmarking group. It is just our closest ... it

is a group that they have attached us to, which we are the closest to. But we are very different because we are an Island and made differently, but it gives you something to look against.

Deputy V. Li:
Yes, I think that is the main thing, because we are on an island it is very different to have the same number of the needs.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Yes, and we also connect with Guernsey, and we will have conversations with them about what they are doing, to try and get a bit of an island perspective and understand how that feels, maybe if we are an outlier in something. I meet regularly with the director there to look at what is happening there to give us a little bit more of an understanding as well.

The Minister for Children and Families:
We have looked at the Isle of Man in the past. Perhaps not as much recently, but we have done in the past.

Deputy V. Li:
Thank you so much for giving such a detailed answer, but I am sure we are going to have further questions we have come across with that specific topic. In a recent letter from you that you suggested that the demand for children's social care and residential provincial provision is expected to increase over the C.S.P. (Common Strategic Policy) period, what are the principal drivers behind that growth in demand?

The Minister for Children and Families:
I think the driver there is the fact that it is recognised that in the past early intervention has not necessarily taken place at the point that it should have done. With the residential review and restructuring and the increase in the number of beds, I would expect that we will be looking at some of those cases with a view to implementing early intervention. We unfortunately have been in a period where that has not been possible, and I think the inspection reports have picked up that our numbers are, in effect, lower than they should be, and dare I say that if we wound back probably 5 years ago when I was first an Assistant Minister, falling numbers were seen as a very positive thing and that all our numbers are falling therefore we are successful. That was, I think, a misguided view. I think that is the best way to put it. That in fact what was actually happening was we were not capturing those children that we need at the time so that is, in effect, improving on early intervention.

Deputy V. Li:
Do you think that our current services are keeping pace with the demand?

The Minister for Children and Families:

To the extent that we are able to do that. We need the investment to improve, as I have said, our ability to do that. Do we know enough now about the children concerned? I think we do. We know where we need to take action. Perhaps, Donna, you can ...

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

Yes, I think whenever you look at a service where you know that there is work to do to strengthen what you are doing, I think when you look perhaps ... when you start to strengthen the quality of practice and you know you have got the staff in the right place and the training and all of those things happen in the right way, you know that perhaps our practice will be more proactive. So we will help families earlier, that is what we should do to keep children at home wherever we can; that should be our biggest drive. We know that we probably have not had the resource quite lined up in the right way for that. Then we know, when you are going to intervene, that you need to do that earlier for children, and I think what we would say is having ... obviously I came to inspect here before I came to work here, and what I think we saw at that time was perhaps our practice was not proactive enough in that space. So you try to intervene ... even when you are getting concerned about a child's experience and whether they are suffering harm, you need to intervene earlier and try to divert that. Whether that is in early help or even when you are into statutory social work, you would want to be intervening and trying to help the family to reduce the risk, reduce the harm, reduce the worry, and try to then dovetail that out of the system. I think that bit of work just has not been strong enough. The bit about adolescent risk, the bit about that our court work has not been strong enough. So a lot of the plan is focused on strengthening those areas of practice. When we did our modelling work that we have done about what we thought the numbers should look like, we have used some of our comparative work from England. Some of what our things look like here, you can see that we are probably too few children in care than you might expect and perhaps were not as proactive to try to intervene much more proactively that will hopefully stop things becoming ... children coming into care. For example, a lot of our children, when we first started the plan, were coming in as late adolescents, really late adolescents, sort of 15. That is a trajectory that would be unusual because when you come in so late it is going to be really hard to change the trajectories for those young people. Whereas if you are doing that much earlier, you can start to rectify and sort of mitigate, I suppose, some of the concerns. What you are seeing now is if you look at our numbers of children coming into care they are coming in a bit younger and earlier, and that is what you would expect if we are getting it more right. But it is a 5-year plan, and I think what we know is practice takes a really long time to turn the curve and the system and the structure has got to be built. So I do not think we would expect it all to be looking as it should until we are probably into our fifth year.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We have a cohort of children that we are aware of where that intervention ...

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Come in so late.

The Minister for Children and Families:
... did not take place, and come in late. I think the sad fact is that one or 2 of them are introduced through the criminal justice system, which is in effect far too late. That if you go back through the history, the intervention should have taken place some years before. So that is a very sad thing to admit that they end up.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Legacy.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes, that legacy.

Deputy V. Li:
I think that is a ... because there are many contributing factors, as a matter of fact, all those students, all those young people who end up in the criminal justice system were also the ones who went through the Children's Service.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Some.

Deputy V. Li:
So that the kind of thing is, if we are looking ... now we are looking forward, how do we support more and more children and young people?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Do you want me to get that?

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes. I mean, we have covered it to some extent, but yes, if you want to.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
A lot of the work that is happening, perhaps with Mark's service, with Children's Services, is looking at how we identify those young people earlier. So when we start to get a really early sense that

something is happening with them, maybe they are being seen outside, and maybe there is some minor anti-social behaviour to start to intervene much earlier. Some of the improvement plan funding has gone to try to strengthen Mark's targeted early support, so that the youth workers are much more ... because they are out there with the young people and have that relationship. So they are much more intervening in that space. Then the multidisciplinary service is much more focused on trying to get children earlier. The joining up of the hub, where all of that multidisciplinary bit happens, they are much more likely to be able to identify young people that are likely to maybe start to get into contact with the law, and start to work more proactively about how we divert. That is what all of that effort ... a big part of the plan is about that space.

The Minister for Children and Families:
That whole wraparound support from the Hub, the Youth Service, social workers, is so much better than it was in the past. We really have got a wraparound service.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
It is much better, improved.

Deputy V. Li:
Now we are in the fourth quarter. Understanding about the importance of the improvement programme, is the £7.5 million for the programme currently being spent at the right pace, at the right ...?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
That will not be Mark, that will sit with us. The improvement plan money is we think is right on track, what we would expect according to our C.P.M.O.s, so the programme management work. The spend has not been all spent because part of it is because the residential restructure was delayed. We are going through processes. Then part of it, there is money in there, which is about the multidisciplinary team. We had to develop that from nothing. So we have been building that. That is about getting the posts. We have spent some time identifying what that team should look like, what we need to have in it, what kind of professionals we need. That is where we have made a decision that it needs an outdoor learning person or a targeted youth worker, all different things. They are all different posts. So it has taken us a bit of time to determine what we need, and then we have been building up as we have been going along. It is not fully spent yet. But you would expect that, because we have not got all the posts filled. Next year, we would anticipate that we will be on track for that to be spent in the right way, that growth.

Deputy V. Li:

Okay. Comparing with last year's annex, so we did a look at the Budget, about £17 million has moved into children's social care and safeguarding, mostly out of the chief officer's office. What moved and why?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Can you say that again?

Deputy V. Li:
£17 million has moved from the children's social care and safeguarding, mostly out of the chief officer's office. I want to understand if that is something that you are aware of or not aware of.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
No, that figure does not sound right.

The Minister for Children and Families:
We would have to come back.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
That definitely does not ...

Deputy V. Li:
That would be really helpful, thank you. What currently are the biggest risks to delivery of your departmental objectives over the Budget period for 2027 to 2030?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Recruitment.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes, I think recruitment of staff is probably one of the biggest risks, although we have made great inroads with ... particularly if we look at social workers, where we have moved from having, I think, something like only about 30 per cent of them as full-time employees to 70 per cent. What we are also doing is we are growing our own social workers, in effect, now through courses at Highlands. But overall recruitment is a significant factor that could limit us. We are in competition with the U.K. (United Kingdom), there is a shortage of people coming into the Children's Services roles, and we are in competition with other nations who also look to the U.K. to look for staff as well. Home growing of staff is something that has to be part of our future social workers at the moment, but I think residential staff, you are beginning to ...

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
It is the biggest challenge, yes.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Is the biggest challenge, but you are getting ...

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Starting to.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Starting to get people coming through there. We have to look to promote that.

The Connétable of Grouville:
We have already mentioned quite a lot about a subject we are quite keen on, which is early intervention and prevention. I am going to move into that topic in a little bit more detail. The department advises that approximately £12.4 million or around 21 per cent of its budget is allocated to prevention and early intervention services, as has already been mentioned. How was that level of investment determined and is 21 per cent a target or a benchmark?

The Minister for Children and Families:
I did a bit of research in this I think when a question came up in the States and 21 per cent is considerably better than the U.K. is able to allocate. It is frightening how little is left in their budget for early intervention.

[14:30]

I think 21 per cent has been pitched in looking at the future needs and an acceptance that early intervention had not received the level of funding that it should have done in the past or staffing so that is how that 21 per cent has been arrived at. We did not look and say, "Right, we are going to spend 20 per cent." It has been very carefully considered as to what we need and the resources we need.

The Connétable of Grouville:
How will you measure whether investment in things like the Children and Family Hub, the Youth Services, and the multidisciplinary services, are reducing demand for statutory interventions?

The Minister for Children and Families:
How will we measure that?

Deputy V. Li:
So what indicators should we look at?

The Minister for Children and Families:
Donna, I am relatively close, but it is quite operational.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
So, you have your national benchmarks that you use. Then underneath that, there will be all the things ... like we look at how many children's cases will step down from early help successfully, and we measure that. So that is about, is it fully successful or partially, were needs fully met or partially met. So then you know at early help about how many families get helped in the right way, and that helps us to understand about whether things are successful and where the progress is made. Then you look at what steps up into statutory services, into social work in the same way. You will measure things like the Youth Service or C.A.M.H.S. about whether people have had their assessments and support in the right way, or whether young people feel that they have been helped and supported. So there are a range of ways of exploring about the impact of what we do and the progress of what we do. That will be made up of targets, performance indicators. Some of it will be about feedback from children, young people, or families. So there is a range of suite of things across every area, really, where there is intervention going in.

The Connétable of Grouville:
Sure. You stated that work through the multidisciplinary service has contributed to significant reductions in children, for example, going missing from care and from home. Can you provide the supporting data and explain how these reductions are being measured?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
So we have the benchmark from last year. We start with most things about when we started the plan. So that is our benchmark, because that is what we can reliably know we have measured ourselves and we understand. So we start there about how many children were missing last year from care. It was one of the big issues when we set up the plan that a lot of children were going missing from care. So we have that as our starting point. You would want as few children missing from care as you can possibly have, but you have to be realistic that children will go missing. So what we have benchmarked, our reduction, that significant reduction is how many children were going missing a year ago, month on month, and how many episodes they were going missing, and we look at that now and we can see that has gone down a substantial amount. Some months it will peak, it might peak more in the summer term when the fair is on or all the different things that are factors that you would expect to see. So that you will always expect things to peak and trough, so

that is how we do it. That will be our benchmark. We will look at some of the English data that tells us about what we expect the averages to be, and then we think are we out of kilter with that or are we ...

The Minister for Children and Families:

What about the Bright Spot Survey? One good thing is in the Bright Spot Survey, I will let Donna finish it, but one good thing that I have seen in there is the level of happiness of children, and that must have helped with the missing. If you are happy, you are not going to want to leave. So that has come out of the Bright Spot Survey, but continue on.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

If they feel safer as well where they live, like care leavers, so the survey, there is a range of measures you look at. So we know that survey was done in 2023, beginning of 2024, and now we are measuring each of the same indicators exactly the same way what we asked children, we ask them again now. Then what we can see is we are not where we want to be, but what we can see is that children are telling us it is getting better, their experience is a bit better across a range of those indicators. So we will keep benchmarking the same way each time, the same question, and then we know we are reliable in what we ask. We are measuring like with like all the time, each time we run that survey, and then the children will tell us. We audit a lot. In social work it is very regulated, so there is a lot of auditing that happens in practice. So children's cases, the whole of their case will get audited, and that will look at all the social work practice, about how we did our assessment or plan or how we worked with the family, what the quality of supervision was like. It looks across all of those areas and that audit is then checked and it is double-checked and it is triple-looped, so that is reviewed 3 times to make sure we think we are accurate. What we know, the quality of our intervention, our casework, if we went back 2 years ago, we would be saying that we had quite a lot of inadequate work in the system, and that is slowly reducing, getting a little bit better all the time. There is less of that, a little bit more good coming in, and that is what you would expect over time. So all of those different things help us to understand quality, impact, timeliness, effectiveness, and then the children's experiences. As part of an audit, they will also speak to the family and ask the family what their experience was. We use complaints, we use children's compliments, all of that across the whole system is what helps you to look at, well, practice is not quite right there, we need to do something different, or this is getting better but we need to do it in a different way. So it is part of a whole system really.

Deputy V. Li:

So, in a nutshell, the biggest success for the Children's Services will be seeing less entry into the care?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
No, probably not.

The Minister for Children and Families:
More successful outcomes from that entry is the key. Unfortunately, we have said that, certainly for the next few years, we are likely to see an increase, but the successful outcomes should be there as well.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Maybe the right entries into care at the right time. So sometimes families will not be able to care for their children, there will be a range of reasons, and sometimes I suppose making those decisions in a timely way and intervening to make children safe, coming into care is the right thing. I suppose it is, do we get the right permanence plan for that child so that they do not drift through the care system, that we find the right permanence plan. So it may be that that child is not going to be safe and adoption might be the right plan, that we do that earlier and that child gets their family and they stay safe. So people think that less care is right, but that is only right if children are safe, and they are cared for and they are not being neglected. If those other things are happening, the care would be totally right.

Deputy V. Li:
That again goes back to the prevention and early intervention.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Absolutely.

Deputy V. Li:
To support the families how to be. In that kind of case is how to make sure the parents take their parental duty and care for their children in the first place.

The Minister for Children and Families:
The one thing that will come out of the improved homes is something that happens at the moment, and which does not help children, is that they can have multiple moves around homes and this thing of stability of having a home: "I have arrived; this is my home." That is going to make a tremendous difference. We are not there yet until we get those homes in place, but we have one or 2 of them coming on. So, yes, that is going to be a big improvement. The other thing that we are doing, which is a soft thing, is that in the past children were not involved in discussions about: "What would you like in the home, how would you like your room decorated, do you want to do some of it yourself?"

These are all things we are doing now, and that has improved the level, you can see that in this Brighter Spot Survey, the fact that they are involved and they belong to that, yes.

Deputy V. Li:
Thank you. Now we can move to the Loving Homes Estate.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Minister, you have already said, of your 3 pillars, the Loving Homes Estate is one of the elements of it. So, just for the record, what is the total approved cost of this programme and how much of it is due to be spent in 2027 and beyond?

The Minister for Children and Families:
So, the capital budget for Loving Homes 2027 to 2029 is £11.8 million and there is another revenue of £3.5 million, so it is almost in total £15 million.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Of that, how much of that is spent and how much is due to be spent?

The Minister for Children and Families:
Well, 2027, we are due to spend £4.2 million, £4.16 million. The 2026 figure, the total capital allocation 2026 to 2030 is £12.6 million and £800,000 was spent in 2026, which leaves the £11.7 million to £11.8 million between 2027 and 2030. So a relatively small amount of that total budget has been spent in 2026.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
To what degree are you confident that the sums due to be spent will survive the 2028-2030 Budget process?

The Minister for Children and Families:
I do not have any reason to think that they will not. The importance of our children is recognised by the Government, and I certainly would fight to ensure that there are no cuts to that. Post Care Inquiry, we spoke about improvements after the Care Inquiry for many years but those improvements were not happening. Finally, we are on board with what should be taking place. We should not have old school caretakers homes as children's homes. They were never long-term suitable places for children. Children deserve a nice place to live in, at the very least, so I do not anticipate that those will be cut.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Okay, thank you. Are all the elements that are due to be delivered in the future fully costed or do they still depend on design feasibility work or what have you?

The Minister for Children and Families:
There is still some feasibility work, but on the whole we are on track and we are certain we know which homes, we know the buildings, and we have the M.D. (Ministerial Decision) signed off, so we are certain of which buildings we will be using.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Is that subject to planning permission?

The Minister for Children and Families:
I do not believe the planning permission will be an issue in the future. I am relatively confident of that. We have had discussions with the Minister for Planning and Regulation about the importance and about recognising how, under the U.N.C.R.C. (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child), children have a right to a home. I am not sure that in some of the decisions in the past that has necessarily been recognised.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Some of our homes have already ... so we have one that is already in train that the planning is sorted, one that is complete that the planning is sorted already, and one in process around planning. So some are already well in train and are already past that point of that being problematic as well. Because some of the properties are already within our gift, because they were already our properties and had the right sort of planning.

The Minister for Children and Families:
They have not been given to Children's Services.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Yes, but we have been able to negotiate our way through some of those. So we have the estate identified now and some homes already coming on track, and some in the future.

[14:45]

The Minister for Children and Families:
As we said, it was probably about 2 years ago, we did say that we would be looking to the Government stock of houses rather than this idea of going out and buying houses off the market,

looking at what was in the Government stock, and seeing if they were suitable. Because why go out and buy if there are houses there that were underutilised.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Some collaborations with things like Andium and things like that as well.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes, we have built on a collaborative partnership with the likes of Andium. It has been very successful. Again, that is something that probably started 2 years ago.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
So, within Loving Homes Estate, I believe Greenfields formed part of that?

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Within that, there was an inherent jurisdiction unit due to open this year. Is it open? Are the running costs part of your revenue spend there or are they outside of that?

The Minister for Children and Families:
They are certainly in there. The inherent jurisdiction, those were the first rooms that we converted. Yes. So inherent jurisdiction, as you know, means there will be now a section of Greenfields that is not totally secure. By not totally secure, I mean that a child staying in there will have the ability to go to school. They will not be under the same very strict controls of not being able to leave the building, within what the court has determined. So they cannot just walk out, but there will be far greater ability where you have your inherent jurisdiction to undertake activities, go to school, and it is a very different environment to a totally secure environment.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Shall I just add as well, I suppose you could still have a secure accommodation order, but there is the potential now, it is not quite finished, it is due to be concluded this year in Greenfields? It will be done this year, the first phase, in accordance with the timescale. There will be the ability, when it is complete - the last room is just being done - to be able to hold custody separate from welfare. That is the whole thing about the I.J.C.I. (Independent Jersey Care Inquiry), more than anything it is that potentially children who have custody might need a different arrangement to a child that is on a welfare order, so you have the ability to use the unit, both sides separately, if you wanted to and needed to.

The Minister for Children and Families:

So, for instance, if you have a child brought that is due to appear in court and cannot, for some reason, be returned to their parents, then you have the ability to provide them with a room that is not in a totally secure environment and ...

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

Not necessarily with the other children in custody as well.

The Minister for Children and Families:

... away from the other children that were in custody. So it is a much better use of Greenfields. It has taken a lot of work because Greenfields was built on the basis, in its day, that there were 8 rooms there, they were all secure, and there was no thought that you might ever have this arrangement. But this arrangement is needed. It can be, I would have thought, quite a frightening experience if you are brought into a secure environment. An environment which is more relaxed is preferable.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

How much of the funding is for workforce development rather than buildings, and do you have construction inflation cover given at the moment everything seems to be going through the roof?

The Minister for Children and Families:

We have contingency in there. The vast majority of this money is for development.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

It is, yes; capital is separate. Obviously, there is the £7 million and a bit is revenue, that is where your additional staffing costs are, and additional staff for residential, et cetera. Things like fostering and those sorts of things is separate from the capital building cost. The capital is covering all of your refurb of those homes.

The Minister for Children and Families:

The capital is not the cost of buildings; it is the cost of ...

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

It is the cost of the refurbishment, the renovation of things like Greenfields has had to have all new doors, because it had cell doors, which you should not have on a secure home. So those cell doors, you might think, are a simple thing to change, but they are steel into the concrete, they need to be lasered, all sorts of things, costs hundreds of thousands of pounds to change; it is substantial. So

all of those things are in there, like the doors, the windows, obviously there were breakable windows, you would not have that in a secure unit. So all of those things, new security system around keys and locks, it is all of those sorts of things. Then the structure of the rooms and then some internal restructure. Then in phase 2, which is your 28, I think, that is about the outside space and the school and creating a school space in Greenfields. As it stands, there is just like one or 2 really small rooms that you can teach in, and they are really limited. This enables the school environment to be brought into it and be able to use that for education, training and employment.

The Minister for Children and Families:
So that is in a separate building.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Yes, so that will become part of the ...

The Minister for Children and Families:
The building that was already on site, so we have not gone out and bought any new buildings, there is no capital cost of buying any buildings. All the buildings we have used were owned by the Government.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Or rented through things like Andium; there will be a long-term rental arrangement.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes, there is one that is here, I correct myself. There is certainly one where we have got, but there is not a great capital cost to that building in acquiring it.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Earlier, Minister, you said about 7 homes, 16 spaces, 7 homes, 27 spaces, so can you just explain how we get more spaces out of the same number of homes?

The Minister for Children and Families:
Okay, so they are not the same buildings; that is the key thing about this. You never want more than 3 to 4 in the normal residential home for children, which you want to have a homely feel, you would not want more than 3 to 4 bedrooms in any of those houses. There is one in here that, for different reasons, will have more than that, because it is supported accommodation, in that it will be that first stage when somebody has been in a home, where that first stage, where they start to learn how to manage their own home. So that one will have more than 3 to 4 beds because it will have, in effect flats ...

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
It has 6 and 2 flats.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes, where we will be able to support young people into living independently.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Your letter said the demand is modelled on 2028, so how is that supporting what you are forecasting for 2030, given from 2020 the numbers have been falling? I have 84 down to 57.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes, and of course that was the old mantra of numbers are falling so we are successful. We are working out of that period at the moment. So Angela has probably done some work on forecasting the way forward. Are you able to give some more details on that?

Programme Director, Children's Improvement Programme:
So, essentially, we build, as you are talking about the number of homes and how many beds they have, we have a certain amount of capacity then. So it is how many children in whatever capacity. So, keeping that available for us, what you might have as well, might you, Donna, is matching on children where we might have less use in a building because it would not be right to put a number of children together who do not match together? So you could potentially have a 4-bedroom home that might only, in that instance, have fewer children in it. So there is a certain amount of overcapacity we need to make the system work, so it is not quite as simple and straightforward as a straight line of demand.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
I think what you are asking is, we have said that by 2028 we are likely to have more children in care, and how that fits. So, we do think we will have more children in care because what all of our forecasting looks like, that our numbers are quite low, and we know that probably we do not have children coming in early enough. We know we have children where we have a sufficiency challenge, like not enough foster homes. It is not only about residential care; it is about the whole system. So, when you look at what we think our number will be, which is our best guess, because we cannot be exact about it, when you look, we know that the numbers are likely to go up because we intervene earlier, a little bit more effectively, and we will have younger children and older children coming into care rather than just older children. Then we know that our number will likely, by 2028, be at our peak. That is because part of our analysis looks at where we have not done so well and not intervened quite right, we have a legacy of children that, in any improvement programme in the land

that you would go to, you know that when we start to get that right, the legacy of children that have not come in or not coming early enough, they will come through that system. Then, if we get that all right, then that should start to tail off and then we would expect things to be back to normal. So we anticipate a little bit of a peak.

The Minister for Children and Families:
So certainly, yes, we have touched on this before, we know there are those legacy children that are there and are going to come into the system, and 28 you think is probably the peak.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
If we do go over that peak, we will have the ability for income generation.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Yes, and probably quite a lot of the model is built on. In the new model, what we would have done before is that we have children coming into care and then we do not have anything in the States, so we perhaps open a caretaker's house or find something. Then it would not be registered and it would not have the planning, and then we would get into a bit of a challenge with all of those things that would take you into a legal route that would be challenging. This model says that we build this number, we keep this number of properties in our estate, they do not have to all be open all of the time if we do not have children in care, but we keep them in the right order, in the right way, and we manage our staffing establishment in a way that it can go up and down. So, if then we do not need a home, we could close the home, because the model is you do not have it fully staffed to permanent establishment with your workforce and you have the ability to close a home, keep the registration running, and then next month when something happens, you might lift it up. Because our numbers are so tiny and we cannot rely on, like you can in England, that next door I have another local authority that has got lots of homes or lots of things, we have to try to create our own resilience and our own sustainability, so it is built like that. It will be able to drop up and down in response to things, without everything being a crisis, and that you can manage it in a good way financially. So the end result should be we would have a more sustainable and less costly system in the work that has been done.

The Minister for Children and Families:
It is probably the most difficult one because you never know when the court is going to introduce an extra child, which means extra staff, and that can happen; that could happen tomorrow.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
That new model is built in a way that the other homes can support it and your staffing model better, a better experience for the child as well. It is really complex, it sounds simple, but ...

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
So, given it is a Budget meeting, we have some numbers and we are trying to marry them together. In your letter on 10th September, you said there were 27 children in residential care, 29 in fostering, 17 off-Island, which we have totted up, we reckon 73, but you have 57 children in care and you have 16 residential beds in 2025, and we are trying to reconcile all these numbers.

The Minister for Children and Families:
We have missed out the 17 U.K. ones.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
I do not know what we have today, but last minute we had 58 children in care, 58 in total in care, and the off-Island number, part of them will be residential, part of them will be fostering, they will make up our total of children in foster care and in residential. So, if you think our 27 we have told you that are in residential, some of them will be off-Island and some of them will be on. Does that make sense? So, 58 is our total children in care number. Of that, there are some that are in residential on and off-Island, and some in foster care on and off-Island.

The Minister for Children and Families:
So when you get to 70, you are double counting some of them.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
You are double counting the off-Island. They make up part of your whole residential, your whole fostering.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
In your letter, you also say that placement stability for children in residential care is going to begin to improve from 2029 towards a national average of 70 per cent. We are trying to establish if we know what Jersey's figure would be currently.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Can you say that again?

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
In your number 5 in your letter: "Performance measures begin to improve from 2029 with upward trend towards national averages of 70 per cent."

[15:00]

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Placement stability that is.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Yes, so we are saying, if the national average is 70 per cent that you are aiming ...

The Minister for Children and Families:
What is it at the moment?

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
... for, what do you think it is now?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
When we started I think it was 35 per cent, and today I think it might be 49 per cent, maybe, way below where we want it to be and that is because we keep moving children when they come into care because we have got no homes for them. We do not get planning, house closes, building has …

The Minister for Children and Families:
It is not a good position.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
It is not good.

The Minister for Children and Families:
We have got a long way to go on that. But once the new homes are in place, I think we can move to the national …

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
We have got foster homes and things.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Your letter says that the capital programme is overseen by a Finance Board reporting to the Children Services Improvement Board. Are you able to share the board's benefits reports with the panel?

The Minister for Children and Families:
I cannot see why not.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Yes.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes, we can do that, we can send those to you.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Yes. You are saying that: "Shortage of placements and carers is rated at tier 1 risk." What has to happen to get that risk moving one notch or more?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
It is complex as all of this is complex. It shows us tier 1 risk and there is a substantial risk management plan underneath that and the improvement plan is that. Until we have sufficient homes when children need to come into care, that we are able to place them and match them properly and we can bring them into care in the right way; that will remain a tier 1 risk. Part of that is made up by needing to get our residential workforce recruited. We have done the work to start to get homes but we need to get the residential workforce recruited to be able to run the homes. Then part of it is about getting enough foster homes as well for children. That may sound simple but you have got to recruit, and then it takes 10 months to get people assessed through to become foster carers, and that is without thinking about matching those children with those carers is quite complex as well, so it is going to take time.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Effectively, you say the timetable is the 2029 and 2030, whatever, for the delivery of all the infrastructure before that could ever start to …

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
To get to the end. The tier 1 risk will reduce as we get more carers and the homes running more effectively. Some of those risks will become less, and currently they are marked as an issue because they are real and they are happening. I suppose as we start to work through and we have less worries and some things start to come together, the issues will become more risks and it will reduce down the sliding scale.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Okay, thank you. Finally from me, just linking it back to the Care Inquiry, how does this programme support recommendations that came out of the Jersey Care Inquiry?

The Minister for Children and Families:
I think it is probably the first realistic attempt to meet the requirements of the Care Inquiry and to improve the safety of children in Jersey, safety of children in care. The attempt in the part that we said with housing stock that was not adequate without sufficient staff, not relying to a great extent on staff who were not permanent. When you look at social workers, 70 per cent are work permanent but there were other areas that were not good either. I think for the first time we have got a realistic chance of meeting those requirements of the Care Inquiry.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
I think something about the children's voice, the children's experiences, I think one of the big things that came from that inquiry is about how we hear ... need to hear and understand children's experiences of the care system. I think that probably there is advocacy now and advocacy resource there. There is the Children's Commissioner, there is all the structure. But in practice we understand much better what children are telling us. Our complaints from children have gone up, which everyone might feel worried about. We think that is a good thing because it means they feel more able to say, no, it is not right for them and then were able to tell us when things are not right. As you start to look at that, we get the feedback from children about their experiences. They have helped to shape Greenfields and whether they want carpets or not and what their lighting should look like or not, the things they do and do not like; that should be what it is about, is it not? Because the biggest thing the Care Inquiry told us about what children need and what they think they need.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Listening to them.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Thank you.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
I think I am next and so my topics are the off-Island placements to start with. I think we have touched on quite a lot of this but the question I have got here is, how many children are currently placed off-Island? A freedom of information analysis said 6 children were in off-Island residential care in 2024 and 2025. The *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* reported 17 of 57 looked-after children off-Island on 1st June 2026, which is a number …

The Minister for Children and Families:

As low as 6, I do not know whether 6 …

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Yes, I do not know; with a peak of 19. But can you give a breakdown of the placement type without identifying the child obviously?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think the media reporting of that has been very disappointing and comments, as you know, I think was it all but 2 children could return? That is totally incorrect. The types of placement you have got, there are, I believe, was it 60 in foster care?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

I can get that. I will get the data up for you.

The Minister for Children and Families:

But more than half of them are in specialist units where we could not provide the level of therapeutic care. I think it is unlikely that we would be able to provide that care in the future either. Because you cannot expect an expert in that field to come to Jersey where there might be just one child that fits those criteria, because the therapy is going to be different from child to child and different experts are going to be involved. There will always be a need for that. It is interesting. I think it might be 8 are in foster care.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

I can give you the number, I have got the numbers.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Have you got them? Yes, because I know that 6 is the number of children who feel that they have no wish to return to the Island.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

You have got 11 in residential, we have got 5 in fostering and then we have got some children - I cannot give you the number because they are lower than 5 - that are in either supported accommodation, really small numbers, older young people that are choosing to be there and some connected. We have got children that are living in England that are subject to an order to us but with the Minister.

The Minister for Children and Families:

With a relative.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
But they are living with a relative in England because it is the right place for them to be. But they are still classed as off-Island; they are living with a relative or a carer.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Okay.

The Minister for Children and Families:
They will not be wanting to return, they are with a relative and …

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
They are with the right people in the right place for them.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes. When we say 11 in residential but some of that, in effect, is therapeutic.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
It will be things like specialist sexual abuse projects or perhaps specialist therapeutic arrangements where children need daily therapy and special help. Some of those children will be there with a really complex disability where they need a really high level of support package which is so extensive; we just do not have that here. If we did we probably would not be able to do it really well because we would not have enough volumes of that to have the level of expertise that you would need. I do not know, if I needed an open-heart surgery I would go to England because the consultant would do it every day. It is the same for those children in those arrangements mostly.

The Minister for Children and Families:
I think that the vast majority of those children did not attend education, whereas now they have received the care. I think 15 of the 17 are involved in some form of education and are taking part in that. Anyone who believes that these children are not in the best place simply does not understand the circumstances which brought them into U.K. care.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
I think maybe to add to that, there is a lot of oversight of those children's plans, much more than you might expect. They are visited by social workers, they are visited by independent reviewing officers, the advocacy services visiting them. We have a Q.A. (quality assurance) service that oversees the quality of the placements there to make sure they are good. They have regular reviews. There is an extensive amount of work that goes on to make sure those children are well cared for. Then they

are supported through making sure the family can get to visit them. The department takes responsibility for trying to make that happen as well as it can. There is a lot of …

The Minister for Children and Families:
Some parents have said that they recognise that the children have been given the …

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
They are in the right place.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes, the correct care and are in the right place. There is an awful lot, as you quite rightly say, we cannot go into the detail or allowed to identify them.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
No.

The Minister for Children and Families:
But I hope we have said sufficient that reassures you that, sadly, the media coverage, it was detrimental to some of the parents.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
And the children.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Some of the parents were extremely upset by those articles.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
We have done quite a significant piece of work looking at the outcomes for those children that are there to establish whether things have improved for them. We have used benchmarking for when they started, any issues we had and whether they have made progress. Quite a substantial number of those children have made really significant progress.

The Minister for Children and Families:
I know of one that returned that there was a very noticeable improvement when he returned.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
The next question, because obviously there has been a Budget meeting as well, is there a new cost for that provision?

The Minister for Children and Families:
Just over £4 million.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
£4.4 million.

The Minister for Children and Families:
£4.4 million.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
You suggest in your recent letter the impact of loving homes on reducing off-Island placements is not expected until approximately 2029. But I think we have touched on that because of the quality of the homes. The money will then not be being off-Island, that that money will just be put into Loving Homes. We have explained why that will not be until 2029. You also state that: "The specialist off-Island placements will always remain necessary", which we have just covered. What proportion of the current off-Island placements that you have spoken about do you believe could realistically provide on-Island or is there …

The Minister for Children and Families:
You could not provide the therapeutic care on-Island currently and it is unlikely in the future. When there was a scheme to set up a therapeutic home in Jersey, one of the biggest deciding factors in bringing that project to a close was the fact that it was recognised that we would not attract the staff to run it.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
No, it makes sense.

The Minister for Children and Families:
We would not get the specialist doctors.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
I think we recognise that, following the conversations we have now had; those questions make sense.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
I think we have probably got a few of those children that are in England where sufficiency is an issue I would say, rather than specialists. When we fix the system a small number of those children ... where probably with the system fixed here you would expect that we should be able to provide the right foster care …

The Minister for Children and Families:
I think 2 or 3 in the 17.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
… and the right residential care because we will do better. We will be able to hold children better and we will have more foster care, but that is going to take a bit of time.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
No, absolutely. Leading on from that, obviously staffing is a thing. Your letter also identified: "Workforce recruitment and retention is critical to reducing reliance on external provision."

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
What are your biggest workforce challenges currently facing Children's Services and what do you plan to do to try and change that?

The Minister for Children and Families:
We have got to restructure the residential service, and that is our biggest challenge at the moment; the implementation of that. It is difficult to go into details and why we cannot implement. The package is known, we just are not able to implement what we have.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
We have implemented but cannot get past the …

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes. We have also recruited on that using that new package successfully.

[15:15]

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

When you say “package”, do you mean salary and benefits?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Okay. And then is there something blocking from doing that? Is that a Government issue or is that …

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Customer practice.

Director, Children’s Services and Chief Social Worker:

Yes, I think change.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Customer practice, I guess.

Director, Children’s Services and Chief Social Worker:

Yes, we are asking people to do things differently and I think that compared to what we have allowed before, I suppose we are requiring something different. I think that that changes as a challenge really. We have got work through …

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

We are requiring something that is in their contract, it is contractual.

Director, Children’s Services and Chief Social Worker:

It is contractual, yes, but it is probably not …

The Minister for Children and Families:

Already in the contract, it is just that in the past it has not been properly managed and executed.

Director, Children’s Services and Chief Social Worker:

It is probably not the right place for here.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I am quite happy for us to have a private briefing on.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
No, we are just interested.

The Minister for Children and Families:
If you would like that we can do a private briefing and explain all the circumstances due, and I think that would be the best.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Yes, it is just that recruitment and retention is probably one of your biggest challenges across, even down to the Youth Service I would imagine.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
No, Youth Service, I will talk to that in a minute.

The Minister for Children and Families:
C.A.M.H.S. is good.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Yes, more the social work ...

The Minister for Children and Families:
Social work is a lot better, but just residential now that we have to fix.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
The residential, okay.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
I think we have hit our target, that we have gone past our target that we set in the improvement programme for social workers as to permanence, we have been one better.

The Minister for Children and Families:
In the future having locally home-grown social workers is going to make that really good.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Yes, absolutely. That was another one of my personal questions, do care leavers ... you monitor them all the way through, do care leavers make good recruits?

The Minister for Children and Families:

We have some already in the service but we have just had 3 interns, have we not?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
They have got …

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes, they were extremely good. One has gone to university now.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Excellent.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
One has just gone to university, 2 are with us.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Two are with us.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Brilliant, that is really good.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Really enthusiastic, yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
That is really good news, is it not?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
We do also support care leavers to go to do their degrees in England, so we have got quite a number of care leavers that are in university in England.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
The care leavers' offer is a really good piece of work.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
The care leavers have to be strong.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We are just improving the cover for when they return to Jersey, are we not? Because of course they have accommodation in the U.K., but they have to be able to come back to something here.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Roger is listening, he will be very happy with that.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Belongings and what else, and so we are working on that at the moment.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
The other thing, your children's workforce, 78 per cent of departmental budget is spent on staffing costs. Why is the proportion of this so high?

The Minister for Children and Families:
I suppose it is very labour intensive; it is going to be, is it not? You have got social workers, residential, C.A.M.H.S., they are all very labour intensive. C.A.M.H.S. cannot operate without the people who have the skills to work with children who, sadly, are suffering from mental health problems.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
I guess the intervention is the worker really, whether it is a social worker or youth worker or a clinician, it is them that do the intervention.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
The physical thing.

The Minister for Children and Families:
You do bring in some money though, do you not, the Youth Service?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
Yes.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Is it just over £1 million a year you …?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
Yes, income generated.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We have some money coming in from that one.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

The ratio is expected to increase or decrease; I should imagine it is going to stay about the same.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Roughly the same, I think. I do not think it is ever going to change very much.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Unless you are going to invest in systems and the administration then I suppose it is the only place you could make savings in realistic terms.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

The hardest roles to recruit are your social workers, is that what you ... and the residential?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

Residential.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Residential at the moment.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

For the moment.

The Minister for Children and Families:

The social worker situation has improved so much that that really is not a problem now. We have overcome a tremendous hurdle there.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

We have got a model that you can really use.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, I do fear that what had happened in Jersey is that because of bad publicity, turnover of staff, that people were put off coming here. But we have overcome that now, but I think that was a genuine factor in some of the recruitment problems for social workers.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
I think my next question is already answered, the vacancy …

The Minister for Children and Families:
Growing our own is the …

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Yes, that is the answer.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
What is your current staff turnover? That is very costly.

The Minister for Children and Families:
This is where we have a problem because we do not have a system. Unfortunately, some of the data is combined with other data, but we are working on being able to calculate the turnover.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Because those cost savings in keeping the same staff is a huge cost, it is expensive, is it not, staff turnover?

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
The department proposes efficiency savings of £469,000 through leadership and service restructures. How will those savings be achieved without affecting front line services?

The Minister for Children and Families:
That is through the restructure, is it not? Yes. Yes, it is done.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

We have reduced the leadership team.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Those at management, yes.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
We had a larger leadership team, which we brought to bring in the improvement programme, and in accordance with the plan that we have set about the timescales of reducing that down we have, hence the savings.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Excellent. That is the end of my questions. Thank you very much.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Right, thank you.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Can I just go back to 78 per cent budget on staffing costs?

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Which may well link in with what you have just said but my question is, do you ever look at that 78 per cent and work out whether it is in the right levels? Because I am sure most people would want much of that budget to go to front line.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Which is that leadership; that is why we have done that ...

The Minister for Children and Families:
We have done that through the leadership, it has been …

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Essentially, you feel that work is done.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Okay. Across most of the system you will have - just because it is quite operational some of this - a manager would have so many social workers and a more senior manager would have so many managers. It is a really well-tried and tested model. We have applied that. But one team manager would supervise 6 social workers, you would not have more because it would not be appropriate because case files would be too high for them to be able to get the right oversight of the children's case work. That overlays up the model and then you will have things like Mark's service where there will be a lot of zero-hours contracting, and it will be done a different way because it is all front line, so very slim on the management. C.A.M.H.S. will look like you have got more senior people there because they are clinicians and you have to have them. I think each bit of the system will look slightly different but will have been worked out on a model that we know is based on how to deliver the best front line practice. As we go along we should shift that and restructure and relook at things all the time. Families were telling us they had too many changes in social worker at the front when they were coming in. Part of the restructure we have just done is to take away our assessment teams because it creates another handover. That has been merged into the social work bit now. It does not create more managers. It keeps as many front line staff and makes the system work right for families as best as you can.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
I do not know if you can do this off the top of your head, but I am trying to look at all the government departments.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Yes.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Do you know, in a chain of command, how many rungs there are between you and a social worker?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
I have got one less than we would have if we were sitting in England. In England we would have service managers.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
That is 367 now.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

We have a social worker, a team manager. In England you would have a service manager, a head of service and then associate director. We have not got service managers here. Only in really critical bits of the system where if you did not have we would have too many people to supervise. Broadly we have tried to keep that quite thin, our management levels. Some of that is about financial ability to what you can sign off and some of it is also about in social work practice what you would be required to do and what senior levels you need to do. You might have adoption decision-making, it has to be done by a certain level of seniority. Those things are all a bit more complex in it.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Okay, thank you.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

Ours should be as slim as we can make it; I think we have tried. We can probably do that in Jersey, which would be more difficult in England because we are closer, theoretically smaller.

Deputy V. Li:

I think we are just going to move to the …

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Youth Service.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Yes, the Youth Service. We are going to have a few questions now on the new centre in St. Helier and also the Le Squez Youth Centre. Minister, in relation to the North of St. Helier Youth Centre, which I still find quite odd, I still think it is in the east, your response letter set out broad benefits but indicated that success measures were still being developed. Why is funding, therefore, being proposed before performance measures have been finalised?

The Minister for Children and Families:

You can ask Malcolm, Malcolm has got delegated responsibility for youth centres, so I am going to …

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes. As we have already identified, there are a large number of flats in that whole area, over 1,000 have been developed in the last couple of years. We have engaged with the people who live in that area to ask them what they would like to see, what would be good for the youth of that particular

area and wider? It was resoundingly favourable to use that building to house a good quality youth service that allowed people to play sports, have a safe space. The good thing about it is right next door we are going to have the Youth Enquiry Service, which helps our young people with particular problems in a more focused way. There was strong evidence right from the start that that particular area of town did need a strong focus on a good youth provision.

The Connétable of Grouville:
What is the anticipated annual running costs?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
The actual cost of running it going forwards, how much is that? I cannot remember off the top of my head.

Associate Director, Young People's Services:
I believe about £800,000.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
Yes, that is it. Obviously there will be staffing costs and there will be ongoing maintenance costs and your usual bits. But what I can say is we are slightly under budget at the moment to deliver on time. Obviously there are a few more costs coming this year but all the budget that has been allocated over the 3 years is coming onstream and looking for completion.

The Connétable of Grouville:
A question here is, what capital expenditure is proposed throughout this Budget period? One would assume that is the entire …

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
Yes. What we have got, if I run through all the years, in 2024 there was a budget of £51,000, 2025 that went to £1.5 million, 2026 £6.6 million, 2027 £6.4 million and then 2028 right at the end £1.52 million, so topping out at £16 million. Where we are at the moment, in 2026 we are up to a spend of £3.7 million on a budget of £6.6 million. We do know that at the tail end of this year there are some additional costs, quite large costs that are coming onstream.

The Connétable of Grouville:
Thank you. What evidence demonstrates the unmet demand for youth provision in St. Helier?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

I think the evidence is not just from the building projects but from us going out and asking young people, what do they want? What would they like to see? When we were considering this project we went out to the School Council Network and obviously within the wider Youth Service itself and through schools, to just say, "What would you think is appropriate for St. Helier? What would you like to see?" Of course there are a number of youth projects around the Island and there are some of course - I know you are going to come on to - that need to be upgraded as well. We do have some strong plans for that as well, but I can talk to that in a minute.

The Connétable of Grouville:
It is right in there.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
Yes.

The Connétable of Grouville:
What specific improvements would constitute success for you?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
I think if you look at the current Youth Service offer, if I can just talk through a few numbers to give it some context. We have got 62 current staff. The whole Youth Service workforce is made up of a blend of full-time equivalent staff, zero-hour contracts and, really importantly, volunteers. At the moment we are just 2 under that establishment of 62, which we should fulfil by the end of this year. We are pretty much on budget as far as staff costs go. We have got 179 people or 179 zero-hour contracts and lots of people like that type of work. Because it is usually over the weekend, it is usually after work and it is additional income for a lot of people; they like doing that. We have also got the volunteers who are trained to the same level as the paid staff. It is a great way that people give back to their community, make sure that all the checks and balances are in place and we have got the right people doing the right work with young people. But the best thing about that is that can be your pool for the people that eventually work in the service.

[15:30]

Also, among the volunteers we have got some really long-serving volunteers. We have spoken before about having a stable workforce, no matter what it is made up of is good for the people that you are serving. If you have got a sustainable continuous workforce where you build those relationships, young people will have the same feeling of belonging, of ownership and of feeling valued. We have one that got the B.E.M. (British Empire Medal) for 40 years of voluntary service.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, 40 years' service. Yes, absolutely brilliant. We saw her at an event, and she has just got so many stories. Brilliant.

Associate Director, Young People's Services:

I think when you look at building a sustainable workforce here in Jersey, for us it is about having plenty of training routes, blended training routes, so you can bring people through. In the Youth Service we have no agency staff. Everyone we have brought through, I would say, probably 90 per cent of our staff have gone all to youth club and have then gone through the journey of being a young worker, a volunteer, a sessional worker, and then do their professional degree. Your youth work at Trinity is in training, yours not, but St. Mary's, St. Ouen's and St. Peter's, those youth workers, I think I have 4 trainees at the moment. I have another 3 that have qualified this year. In St. Peter, St. Mary worker and our outdoor learning have qualified this year with their degrees. I have another 3 in training at the moment within Trinity, Gorey, and one other at St. John's. Yes, so that we have a number of them in training so that we do grow. That was part of the Care Inquiry, is how do you build a sustainable workforce for Jersey? There is a far more efficient, effective way of doing that if we can grow our own and put them into our work.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Mark is a perfect example of that.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

He is.

The Minister for Children and Families:

That was his route.

Associate Director, Young People's Services:

I started at the youth club and I have not left yet.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Madam Connétable, you asked about turnover: 1.6 per cent is the turnover for the Youth Service.

The Connétable of Grouville:

I cannot imagine there are many States departments that can say that.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

No, that is very low.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

No, I doubt there are many companies who could say that, in fairness.

The Connétable of Grouville:

There is the big question now. The big question is for the St. Helier system, for the St. Helier youth: what is the anticipating opening date?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Let me get this. There are 2 projects going on. We have Belmont House, which will be the Youth Enquiry Service, which is currently housed at St. James temporarily until it shifts across. The opening date for that is 15th January 2027. Now, as far as the brewhouse goes, let us keep it a little bit more fluid because projects can ...

The Connétable of Grouville:

I saw that.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

We will say quarter 2, 2028, and that will be some ribbon to cut, will it not? That will be amazing.

The Connétable of Grouville:

We will hold you to that.

Associate Director, Young People's Services:

We do have regular meetings with the developer, a monthly meeting, so I am on site monthly. We have our board meeting monthly, so we review all finances, make sure everything is in the right domain. At C.P.M.O., it is all green. It is a project on track. What is important is that we are going to give children and young people at St. Helier that live in the town area somewhere to go, something to do, and someone to talk to when life goes wrong, and the other Parishes are really lucky to have that. St. Helier has not had that facility. For me, seeing young people in there and engaging in positive activity will be the real … for me, that will be the biggest point, seeing them thrive.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

We spoke about early intervention. Jersey Youth Service is early intervention for the whole of the Island's youth; 36 per cent of the Island's youth use some form of Youth Service. That is good coverage.

The Connétable of Grouville:

That is a real positive story.

The Minister for Children and Families:
I do not know what happened exactly in St. Helier, because when I was a teenager there were 4 or 5 youth clubs within St. Helier.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
Yes, what we have now is First Tower.

The Connétable of Grouville:
Aquila Road.

Associate Director, Young People's Services:
Aquila closed 21 years ago. Seaton closed 20 years ago. Aquila was sold. Seaton was sold for £10, that plot of land, to build housing on there and they were never replaced. It has been a long journey.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
I went to The Rev.

Associate Director, Young People's Services:
The Rev, Georgetown.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
The Rev. We are reminiscing now.

Associate Director, Young People's Services:
It is important at St. Helier.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
It was important in our day, and it has not changed now.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
No, it has not. It is more important now.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
It has just disappeared, which is really sad.

Deputy V. Li:
How do you utilise the St. Andrew's Park one?

Associate Director, Young People's Services:
First Tower? First Tower we did … it was a small little building. We got some money when the stimulus money came available. We got £1.5 million. We revamped that one and since then the numbers at First Tower have gone through the roof, which is great. That is what we want. We want places to be busy. That is open 5 nights a week. One night a week, the La Pouquelaye Group go down from La Pouquelaye to use it, and then the other nights, it is the First Town project. It is busy, but the sheer number of young people we have living in town, it is big numbers and young people should have a safe space to go and meet and be with their friends.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
Absolutely. Just like we wanted.

Associate Director, Young People's Services:
Precisely.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
No different.

The Connétable of Grouville:
What are the estimated capital and ongoing revenue costs of operating this facility?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
Just the youth centre in the brewhouse? The total capital is going to be £60 million.

The Connétable of Grouville:
Do you perceive any for …

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
Ongoing?

The Connétable of Grouville:
Yes, ongoing.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

There will always be some maintenance. It will be a brand-new building, so that will feed in slowly. Have we got an actual figure?

Associate Director, Young People's Services:
In the revenue bid that we have in, there are a number of staffing posts - so cleaner, caretaker, et cetera, and youth workers - but then we have allowed in the maintenance element for £68,000 to go to J.P.H. (Jersey Property Holdings) to do some of the maintenance works they need to undertake. Then we have a broken-down budget for utility costs and everything else, as you can imagine, that goes into a centre. I think it is around about the £800,000 mark that we have for the ongoing staffing and maintenance and all that for each year. As part of the £16 million, we have the first year's full funding and then we will be doing some work for Treasury next year.

The Connétable of Grouville:
Okay, thank you. We have already mentioned how you have engaged with local residents and stakeholders, and I am sure the panel are very pleased about that. How will success be measured once the facility becomes operational?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
I think this is a question of continual engagement with young people who use the service, who would like to use the service, and people who live in the surrounding area. We constantly check in back with users of the service to see what positive effect it is having on their lives, so that is always an ongoing process.

The Connétable of Grouville:
Yes, marvellous.

Associate Director, Young People's Services:
Yes, and I guess our biggest measure as well is, across the service, we are a voluntary service. They do not have to access Youth Service. It is a voluntary relationship, but 57,000 times they came to youth club last year with 3,653 young people. It tells its story. There are some other measures that we are going to be looking at going forward: what difference do we make to those young people and how do we measure some of that? We are going on a bit of a journey as a service on how we get those measures and we are looking at some of that work at the moment as a service.

The Connétable of Grouville:
Okay. I am going to move on to Le Squez. What provision has been made within the Budget for the development of Le Squez Youth Centre?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

That is being brought forward and there are some plans that we are just working up at the moment. We are going to start on the feasibility of it towards the end of this year. What we will be looking at is how can we make best use of the building which is there. Not just a refurb, but a slight expansion. We looked at a couple of options. One was to rebuild in the car park and then demolish the old one. I think the reality is that the structure of the building is good, it just needs to be brought up to date, but it will not just be a simple refurbishment. The feasibility will look at what are the options and the real possibilities for increasing the size of it. It will be more fit for purpose because we do recognise, and even the Chief Minister recognised when we visited a year or so ago, that this is a fantastic facility, again, in a developed area and because all those buildings around it are shiny and new, it does start really showing this age. There will be investment in that project, but we need to do that feasibility, which will start at the end of this year.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We know the Sport Hall is far too small. That will come out in the feasibility, but it is a given that we know that that is one of the places where it falls down. If you think about it, previous plans have been around demolishing and whatever. If you do not need to demolish a building that is still structurally sound, then there are some big savings there.

The Connétable of Grouville:

We noted when we were able to visit - and thank you, Mark, for the visit - that the 5-a-side indoor court was more like a 3½-a-side.

Associate Director, Young People's Services:

Yes, exactly.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Smaller children in those days. **[Laughter]**

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

If nothing else, the floor would need to be replaced as well, so it really is time.

Associate Director, Young People's Services:

Part of the feasibility does involve young people, so they have got the consultation with them.

The Connétable of Grouville:

That is another question: since the project has been considered, has the scope changed since the original approval? Is there anything you are thinking that you could add to that service?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think that is going to come out in the feasibility, though, is it not?

Associate Director, Young People's Services:

I think some of the feasibility … as you can imagine, when you ask young people what they want, they are going to want a bowling alley, they are going to want a swimming pool, and they are going to want water chutes. Then we have to: "Okay, now let us work within the budget we have and what we can achieve."

The Connétable of Grouville:

Realistically, yes

Associate Director, Young People's Services:

We know, from good practice that we have across the whole of the Island, that the real popular stuff is around cooking food, doing art and craft work, having the tuck shop, having a room that can be loud with music and disco bits, but that is the kind of spaces, and then a bit of social area and things like that. The pool tables, the ping pong, they are still great. They still engage in that stuff.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Still want to do that.

Associate Director, Young People's Services:

We know good practice, the way we operate from the other 18-plus sites across the Island. We know what needs to go into it, but we listen to them and actively involve them in other stuff.

The Connétable of Grouville:

When does the Minister expect to approve a preferred design, the final one?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

We are still at the feasibility stage.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Let us get the feasibility, but we have made every effort, in effect, to start on this project, and we are doing so with the feasibility. Let us take it from there and then see what comes in next year's budget.

Associate Director, Young People's Services:

We will work it out. We are working with architects and designers now.

The Connétable of Grouville:

That is good. That is one of the other questions I was going to ask, but here is the crucial one: when does the Minister expect delivery?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Certainly, after the delivery of the St. Helier Youth Centre. I will not be Minister by then, so it will be whoever is then in post. At this point, I cannot say, but what we are saying is we are committed to the project.

The Connétable of Grouville:

That is most important.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We have always said that it will be the next one after the Town Youth Centre.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, and it is however the project is managed to minimise the disruption on it, because once at least the North of Town project is up and running, then some of those children, young people, will naturally gravitate to that service for hopefully a short period of time, but there may be a way that we could still keep the service going while redeveloping it. Again, that will all come out in the feasibility study.

The Connétable of Grouville:

Thank you very much. Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Chair.

Deputy V. Li:

Thank you. Now we are moving to the last topic of the day, children's rights and outcomes.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

I think we just had the highlight, have we not? Minister announces his retirement date.

Deputy V. Li:

That is a plan. That is a plan.

The Minister for Children and Families:

I have said that this is my last term.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Only just started.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes, just started, 3½ years here.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
In terms of outcomes, for the investments proposed within the Budget, what would you see as the outcomes you are expecting for children next year and the K.P.I.s (key performance indicators) we can look to, to establish that it is happening?

The Minister for Children and Families:
All right. The first thing is we mentioned the Bright Spots Survey, and we need to build on what we are seeing from that, which is that children are seeing improvements. They are happier in their care facilities, and we need to make sure that they continue to feel happy and safer where they are. For children in residential care, there is an increased focus on gaining their views and engaging them in the whole process. I want to see development of that. It should have always been the case that they had input into the decoration of their bedrooms. They need to feel that it is a loving home. That is the end result here. We have our Children in Care Council, which we need to increase the input of children into that and help us with the direction that we are moving in. I think perhaps Donna and Angela can add to what I have said about the outcomes.

[15:45]

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
I think maybe placement stability will be a really important indicator for us about seeing that move in the right direction, that children are not moving as much. Some of our work around our earlier intervention, wanting to see that we are having those successful outcomes, but perhaps we have more effective work in that earlier point we want to see. I think probably one of the things we spend a lot of time talking about and is a source of … our focus is around the reduction in risk for children outside of the home and the implementation of that risk outside the home framework that people are working on across all the bits of the system, whether it is the Youth Service or C.A.M.H.S. or social work. I think something about the joining up of all of that as well. You want that to be more effective across the system, seeing that things happening in a more systematic way.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes, so it is all joined up.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Are there specific milestones we should be keeping an eye out for next year so we can say it is on track?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
We have a range of those all built into the Improvement Plan. There are hundreds of them, literally. I think maybe if it is something you want us to help you to look at, perhaps how to be able to establish that from a Scrutiny point of view, I think we could help you with that about giving you some of our core indicators. Then that would help you to think: "They are the really big things that we are focused on under the Improvement Plan and that the business case was built on", and then you could measure it against that, if the Minister was happy with that.

The Minister for Children and Families:
I am happy, yes. Yes, absolutely.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
That would be helpful.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:
I think that is what we asked for earlier, yes.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
We have already got that.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
We have discussed some of these things, but you have identified targets around placement stability, care leavers in education, employment training, readiness for independent living. Do you have specific targets for 2027 and years beyond that?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Yes, whether it is assessment timeliness or referral numbers or targets around young people in suitable accommodation, care leavers not in employment, education or training, all of those areas have targets that are forecast across the entire of the 5 years, 6 years of the plan. In every measure, we would expect a progression over time and what the end outcome is, that is built into the business case that you could see a measure against what we forecast, what we thought was going to happen.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:
Do we have confidence we can spot when things are not going to plan and there will be remedial measures available to redress that?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

With those targets that are set, you can see where things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction because the little arrows and the amber or red or green R.A.G. (red, amber, green) rating will help you to see that, whether things are moving the right way or the wrong way. Certainly, you could have that and see that, and it would help you to look. That is monitored by the Improvement Board. The Improvement Board sits monthly … bimonthly, monthly? I am trying to think.

Programme Director, Children's Improvement Programme:

Monthly.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

Monthly. It escaped my head. Yes, it sits monthly. We have an Estates Board that sits as well. There are 2 of those boards that sit separately and then they report into central Government and the C.P.M.O. process or the programme management is also monitoring and establishing our effectiveness. Then the budget is monitored as well and the spend. There is quite a lot of oversight of that. You could see progress or not. If there was an area of practice that you felt you wanted to understand, we could certainly tell you: "This is the target and this is how we are doing against it. These are the challenges or the progress we are making", around any of those various areas, whether it is care leavers, children in care, early help, whichever piece of the system you wanted to understand.

Deputy C.J. Rebindaine:

Minister, in your response letter, you talked about the involvement of children and young people in the service design. You have referenced things like carpet, no carpet, I recall, but are there any other examples where their feedback has changed your direction, your attention?

The Minister for Children and Families:

I think in the …

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

University? University accommodation.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Yes, university accommodation. Children brought to our attention the difficulties they had in that they have university accommodation, but of course they come back to Jersey, and they do not

necessarily have a base or somewhere to put their belongings. We are actively working on … I think, is it 4 places?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
We are looking at … yes.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes. The aim is to have 4 places for people returning from university where they need time during the university breaks. That is one which has come directly from children ... the rooms within Greenfields.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
The work that you have seen on the young people who are in accommodation, so the supported accommodation, their certificate for independence, they have been working with young people on that.

Programme Director, Children's Improvement Programme:
Yes, life skills.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
Building the life skills course. There is the work on policies and procedures that the interns are all doing at the moment. They are building the Children in Care Council.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes, the interns are working on … yes.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
They are working with finance.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes, the interns, the work they are doing, which of course they are very close to.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:
They are consulting all of the young people. They are going around to every children's home.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Who better to go out to the young people than some of their peers?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

Recruiting them on to the Children in Care Council so the care-experienced young interns are doing that work. They have been doing the policies and the leaflets for young people about: "How do you know about your I.R.O. (Independent Reviewing Officer)?" or: "How do you know about your social worker?" They are building all the leaflets for those young people, so it works for them.

The Minister for Children and Families:

There is far more involvement than there was.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Will the graduates come back and find employment in Jersey?

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

The university graduates?

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Yes.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

Some will.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Some will stay in the mainland, but some will come back.

Director, Children's Services and Chief Social Worker:

We do have some.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We have some that are working for us now that have done degrees in the past year.

Deputy V. Li:

If the panel was going to sit here and review the budget towards your retirement - your potential - what evidence would show it has generally improved the lives and outcomes of Jersey's children and families?

The Minister for Children and Families:

Well, I think for the children the improvement is coming in those loving homes and the facts that we can already see in the work that we have managed to do that they are in a happier environment. To me, that is one of the key outcomes of this. For families, it is more about the increase in that wraparound care, right from the point that they might come to the hub with a problem. There is that whole group of people that will surround them and help them. I think that is a big change to the way we operated previously.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

And the youth centre.

The Minister for Children and Families:

And the youth centre. I nearly forgot, but yes, the St. Helier Youth Centre. Children from across the Island will see some of the benefits of the facilities that are there. It is not just children in St. Helier.

Associate Director, Young People's Services:

The centre is not … it becomes the hub. It will produce a community. There are going to be new volunteers. There are going to be parents that are going to come and volunteer. There will be new people getting involved. I lived and breathed St. Peter's Youth and Community Centre and there is a community that is around that when you are not… it is really important to have. Loneliness, you know people coming out and even working for us, volunteering for us, even young people, loneliness.

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

Loneliness is a huge issue worldwide. It is the biggest killer.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:

As a side benefit, it could become … if the event of something not so good happened and we suddenly needed a big space with cooking facilities and all that sort of stuff, and the Town Hall is not always the best when something like that happens, it becomes another resilience centre. That is an added benefit.

The Minister for Children and Families:

We bought the new C.A.M.H.S. building. We know that the previous facilities were not necessarily a place that children wanted to visit. In renovating Bermuda House, the feedback we got from children has been part of that.

Deputy V. Li:

To conclude our public hearing, is there anything else that you want to bring to the panel and for us to be aware of any highlights that you wish to share with us?

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
We have spoken about quite a lot, have we not?

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes, we have.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
Explained everything in great detail.

The Minister for Children and Families:
Yes. I know if there was, we would come to you. Immediately, I cannot think of anything, but I am sure things will occur in the future where we look to you for help, so yes.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
The previous panel did visit the centre. We have been … yes, twice. If the new panel wants to pay a visit when it is safe to do so, we can always make it safe. It is a hard hat area, but it is really nice to see it develop because I have seen it right from the start. The transformation already, as you will remember, Connétable, is amazing.

The Minister for Children and Families:
I would like to say that I am very proud of all the staff that have been part of where we have got to so far. If I look at where we were 5 years ago when I was an Assistant Minister and the level of care that I can see coming through, I think that is a tremendous achievement by the staff. They have all played their part in that.

The Connétable of Grouville:
And I am very much looking forward to seeing Mark up on a ladder with his Brasso polishing that big tongue.

The Minister for Children and Families:
We have been doing that once a week.

Assistant Minister for Children and Families:
Full-time job.

Deputy V. Li:

Thank you so much for your time.

The Minister for Children and Families:

Thank you very much. Thank you.

[15:57]