
Early Years Policy Development Board (the 'Board' or the 'EYPDB') Meeting 4
Monday 16th December 2019, 1030 – 1300hrs

Board:

Minister for Education, Senator Tracey Vallois (TV) (Chair)
Assistant Minister for Education, Deputy Jeremy Maçon (JM)
Minister for Children and Housing, Senator Sam Mézec (SM)
Deputy Louise Doublet (LD)

Executive Support:

Strategic Policy, Performance and Population:
Andrew Heaven – Director Children's Policy (AH)
Sarah Stoten – Policy Principal, Children's Policy (SS)

Ministerial Support Unit:

Martin Keith (MK)

Children, Young People, Education and Skills (CYPES):

Mark Rogers – Director General CYPES
Cathy Hamer – Chair Best Start Partnership
Nicola Mulliner – Head of Early Years Service

1. Welcome and apologies

1.1 TV welcomed all those in attendance, no apologies were received.

2. 4Insight – Initial findings from Focus Groups

2.1 Dorothy Parker (DP) and Beatrice Speck (BS) from 4insight gave a presentation sharing the headlines from the parent / carer focus groups they had facilitated.

The research project aim was to understand parental viewpoints and experiences of Early Childhood Care and Education.

Specific objectives included exploring:

- what support is or should be available?
- what services do families have or should have access to?

- what advice or information is considered important and whether it is easily located/accessed or not?
- what do parents/carers understand Early Childhood Education to be and to what extent and what elements do they see the Government being responsible for?
- what challenges do parents/carers face in the period from conception to five? (including emotional, social, financial)
- when do parents/carers believe they need help most and who do they think is best placed to offer it?

Headlines

- Majority felt that Early Years is defined as the years leading up to school i.e. newborn to 5
- Most mentioned they wouldn't call it Early Years, rather their terminology was "babies and toddlers"
- Most did not include conception as a stage of Early Years
- Many felt that this stage is extremely important for a child's development, especially as every child is different
- Early Years perceived critical for a healthy, happy society

Main Themes

- Cost
- Breastfeeding
- Lack of support
- Parental leave

Key Challenges and highest points of stress

- Some specific experiences of participants were discussed, highlighting some key challenges and points of stress

DP went on to expand on participants' feedback about existing support and services that are available for parents and young children. Overall, those feeding back highlighted they got most support from friends and family (if available). The lack of consistent accurate information was also an issue.

Some felt that there was a perception that services were more targeted to certain parents that should be available to ALL parents.

The need for more sign-posting was also discussed as it was felt that currently parents were poorly informed and relied on word of mouth.

Many felt that maintaining parental mental health was important, but needs were not being met. Quicker access to mental health services and recognising the emotional support needed early on might prevent higher demand.

The notion of a parental Hub was mentioned a number of times, with a link being made by some participants who were aware of the newly opened listening lounge. The opportunity to provide Island-wide provision to talk with other parents was a popular idea. DP commented on seeing number of participants who had stayed to chat after the groups and exchanged stories/ information.

CH asked DP, of the parents who suggested a central hub, were the majority asking for one hub in St Helier for instance or more local community hubs? DP confirmed it was one central hub supported by a great website that parents wanted. DP also advised that some focus groups were not up to date on what support and services are available. DP mentioned that some of the parents shared they planned birth dates to coincide with Nursery Education Fund criteria.

It was noted that this information would be useful to project leads of the Closer to Home, Right Help Right Time and redesign of Emotional Well-being and Mental health services for children projects.

LD asked of the information gathered from the Focus Groups could be shared with the Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI), DP advised she would be happy to present the findings to other groups.

LD asked if Sarah Wright from the BFI could be invited to the next EYPDB.

3. Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle Survey – Children and Families

3.1 Graham Sproats (GS), Statistics Jersey gave an overview of the responses to the Children and Family questions within the 2019 Opinions and Lifestyle Survey.

<https://www.gov.je/government/jerseyinfigures/statisticscommunitypeople/pages/socialstatistics.aspx>

Over 3,400 households were selected at random to complete the survey in June and July 2019. In order to cover the entire adult population at random, the household member who next celebrated their birthday, and who was aged 16 years or over, was asked to complete the survey. Respondents were able to complete the survey by post or online. Almost 1,100 people completed the survey questionnaire, a response rate of 33%.

36% of response were from parents and carers and the overall cohort is random and representative of the population.

SS had liaised with FNHC, CYPES and other stakeholders to design some questions to be included in this year's survey.

MR asked if there were any comparisons with other jurisdictions, GS confirmed there were not.

NM commented on why, when asked where parents/carers would look for advice, was the option for GP surgery or Health Visitor combined. She suggested that the cost difference between General Practitioner and Health Visitors may have skewed the responses.

Despite respondents identifying online delivery methods for finding information out, they identified face to face contact as the most preferred method to receive parental support.

SS advised that the Children and Young People Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health redesign work and previous work of the Best Start Partnership could be used to cross- reference information from the survey. CYPES may also have more useful information gathered for the Right Help Right Time project that could be combined.

SS said the message is that parents want more universal services, not targeted. AH commented that there was enough information gathered now from the recent work and previous work and all could be layered together to inform the Board

4. Early Years Policy Direction

SS and AH briefed the Board on a draft Policy Direction Report which provided a precis of the research and thinking to date.

SS advised that Oxera were about to start the market research work with providers of Early Years settings. A lot of effort was being put in to encourage providers to take part and TV mentioned some had previously shared figures with the Scrutiny review.

A suggested timeline was agreed by the board which would enable time for the detailed analysis of the Early Years Market Place and the Board to fully understand the implications of any alternative policies regarding Government funding of Early Childhood Education

In line with a statement made by Deputy Doublet in the States Assembly, initial proposals would be available by the end of the first quarter, this provided sufficient time to develop more detailed recommendations to COM by the end of the second quarter.

SS highlighted that from a policy perspective he Broad may want to consider what was feasible in this period and that the three policy areas could be considered short, medium to long term proposals that could be passed on to operational leads for implementation. The Board already had an international evidence perspective, understanding the impact on business would be expanded by the Oxera work.

These included:

- 1) Extend the provision of Early Childhood Education (ECE)
 - Whether to extend the existing NEF delivering ECE to 2-3 years
 - Whether to extend the existing provision for 3-4 year olds either to 30 hours or beyond the current term time limits to 52 weeks
- 2) Building capacity in the Early Years Workforce by providing more opportunity to improve workforce qualifications
- 3) Provision of family friendly employment measures

AH suggested that the Board should aim to present headline policy areas to the Council of Ministers (CoM) by the end of March 2020. Once it had time to review the Oxera Report.

After CoM more detail would be required of where responsibility lies to achieve the outputs required to further the Policy proposals of the Board. Ministerial responsibility as well as officer level Senior Responsible Owners (SRO) would be required for all workstreams, and it was likely several would fall outside of the CYPES department.

AH advised that the interim report can be drafted from the policy direction document and it was important to keep the policy aims high level and avoid delving in to the detail which should be left to the operational delivery.

The next meeting of the board was to be scheduled for Monday 3rd February 2020 where the preliminary report from Oxera would be presented as well as the final report from 4insight.

5. Action Points

	Action required	Allocated to	Required by	Date completed
1	To arrange the next Board meeting for 3 rd February 2020	MK	17 th December 2019	17 th December 2019

Minutes agreed:

Date: 04 February 2020



Senator Vallois
Chair of the Policy Board

Agreed for publication:

Date: 04 February 2020



Senator Vallois
Chair of the Policy Board