



Dear Parents

Your chosen nursery is a member of JEYA – the Jersey Early Years Association.

JEYA members, like yours, provide childcare for:

- approximately 100%* of all children aged 6 months to 3 years and
- 50% of children aged 3 to 5 years.

That's three-quarters of all the Island's children before they start formal, primary education.

(*A small and decreasing number of places are also provided by independent child minders.)

JEYA member 'staff teams have never gone on strike, work 52 weeks a year and their dedication allowed nurseries to stay open throughout the Covid years.

Working parents, supported by JEYA members are an essential part of the Island's economy. Without our childcare provision, thousands of parents would find it impossible to work as organisations are unable to recruit.

Some Background

Since the end of Covid, JEYA has been engaged in a concerted effort to try and get politicians, senior civil servants, representatives from CEYS (the department that has responsibility for nursery registration and administration) and just about anyone else who will listen to address the following issues and to understand the delicate economic reality.

Now the sustainability of the EY sector is under threat as the following perfect storm of external factors combine, these include:-

- the financial costs of childcare to all parents, particularly in times of very high inflation,
- chronic local staff shortages of both qualified and unqualified practitioners caused by a depleted Jersey labour market and intense competition for employees from other sectors. The qualified experienced members of staff are important to maintain quality care,
- an inability to recruit from outside Jersey,
- the demand for places,

- training – both for specialist responsibilities and higher lever qualifications,
- a new financial model for EY, and
- how a viable and sustainable future might look.

Numerous meetings have been held, huge amounts of time and effort from JEYA and the EY sector have gone into this engagement over the past years and often it looked like some real progress might be made.

JEYA achieved some targeted success in this year's contract negotiations over next year's rate to be paid to participating providers for the NEF (Nursery Education Funding) which is applicable only to parents of children aged three to five years and allows for 30 hours a week for 38 weeks a year of free provision.

Please be aware that apart from the PR slogans such as "putting children first" this is the only investment the Government of Jersey makes in our part of the sector, which to repeat, is **three-quarters of the total**.

Recent Events

Just over two weeks ago, a crisis meeting was held between JEYA, the Minister, and the relevant Deputy Minister for Education along with their senior officials.

JEYA members were reporting that due to the economic factors they were experiencing, fuelled by rampant inflation and an ongoing recruitment crisis, it was looking like fees to parents would most likely have to go up. JEYA was, and remains, seriously concerned about the effect this will have on the finances of families. JEYA repeated a request made numerous times over the past years for additional support for working parents to help mitigate the on-cost.

After a less than cordial exchange, the JEYA committee left with cautious optimism when it was agreed that JEYA members would, where possible, be asked to delay announcement of any fee increases for two weeks while the Ministerial team requested some forms of financial assistance for working parents from the government's Cost of Living Strategy Group.

Nothing happened until yesterday (July 4th), when we were informed "**that there is currently no additional support available to parents to reduce the cost of childcare fees**". We are told that the Cost-of-Living Strategy Group had determined that support from government in meeting childcare fees did not increase economic productivity in the island.

Barring a last-minute change of mind, we appear to have come to the end of the road.

Hopefully, this information may be of use should you wish to take up these matters personally with your elected representatives.

The JEYA Committee