



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
The National Assembly for Wales**

**Y Pwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc
The Children and Young People Committee**

**Dydd Iau, 10 Ebrill 2008
Thursday, 10 April 2008**

Cynnwys
Contents

- 3 Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datgan Buddiannau
Introduction, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest
- 4 Rhaglen Waith Tymor yr Haf
The Summer Term Work Programme
- 5 Y Cynllun Gweithredu Rhianta
The Parenting Action Plan

Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,
cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Eleanor Burnham	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Angela Burns	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Christine Chapman	Llafur Labour
Helen Mary Jones	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Chair of the Committee)
Lynne Neagle	Llafur Labour

Swyddogion Gwasanaeth Seneddol y Cynulliad yn bresennol
Assembly Parliamentary Service officials in attendance

Claire Griffiths	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Tom Jackson	Clerc Clerk
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 1.17 p.m.
The meeting began at 1.17 p.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datgan Buddiannau
Introduction, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

[1] **Helen Mary Jones:** Croesawaf bawb i gyfarfod cyntaf y tymor. Mae croeso ichi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg. Gŵyr pawb fod clustffonau ar gael i wrando ar y cyfieithiad neu i glywed y drafodaeth yn well. **Helen Mary Jones:** I welcome everyone to the first meeting of the term. You are welcome to speak in Welsh or English. Everyone is aware that headsets are available to listen to the translation or to hear the discussion better.

[2] Atgoffaf yr Aelodau a phawb yn oriel y cyhoedd i ddiffodd eu ffonau symudol, BlackBerrys, ac ati. Nid yw'n ddigon da eu rhoi ar 'tawel', oherwydd maent yn amharu ar y system ddarlledu. Nid ydym yn disgwyl ymarfer tân heddiw, felly, os clywn larwm tân, golyga hynny fod argyfwng go iawn, a bydd angen i bawb ddilyn y tywysyddion, a fydd yn ein arwain yn ddiogel o'r cyfarfod. I remind Members and everyone in the public gallery to switch off their mobile phones, BlackBerrys, and so on. It is not good enough to put them on 'silent' mode, as they interfere with the broadcasting system. We are not expecting a fire drill today, so, if we hear an alarm, it means that there is a genuine emergency, and everyone will need to follow the ushers, who will lead us safely from the meeting.

[3] A oes gan Aelodau fuddiannau i'w datgan? Gwelaf nad oes. Do Members have any interests to declare? I see that you do not.

[4] Nid ydym wedi cael ymddiheuriadau, a gwelaf fod pawb yn bresennol. Diolchaf i'r We have not received any apologies, and I see that everyone is present. I thank those of

sawl ohonoch sydd newydd ddod yn syth o you who have come straight from another
bwyllgor arall i ymuno â ni. meeting to be with us.

[5] Thank you to Angela and Lynne, who were in the Finance Committee meeting, for getting here on time. I know that you did not get much of a lunch break. How that can be made easier is under discussion, not only for members of this committee, but also for members of other committees.

[6] I also wish to draw your attention to the fact that we have had an initial response from the Government to our report on advocacy, which accepts some but not all of the recommendations. We will receive a fuller written response to each recommendation by half term. The Government's response and the report will be debated in Plenary on 8 May, straight after half term. That will give Members an opportunity to express their views about the Government's response, which is, in some measure, disappointing at this time. However, I also highlight for Members that we have not yet received the Government's full response.

[7] **Eleanor Burnham:** I thought that half term was at the end of May, but you just said that 8 May was after half term.

[8] **Helen Mary Jones:** Sorry, Eleanor, I did not mean after half term; I meant after the bank holiday. Given that you and I spent most of this week trying to work out whether we were meeting on 1 May, dates are clearly not my strong point this week.

[9] **Eleanor Burnham:** I just wanted clarification.

[10] **Helen Mary Jones:** My apologies. We are looking at a fairly short meeting today. We hoped that the Deputy Minister for Regeneration would come to talk to us about Communities First and the Government's child poverty work. It has not been possible to arrange that for today, because of his diary commitments, but he has agreed to come to our meeting on 8 May, which will be on the same day as our debate in Plenary. So, we will have an opportunity to question the Deputy Minister then, and perhaps it is useful that we have a bit of time to prepare the questions that we want to put to the Deputy Minister. *[Interruption.]* Sorry, I am given to understand that the Plenary debate will actually be held on 7 May. Now that we have sorted all that out, we can move to item 2.

1.20 p.m.

Rhaglen Waith Tymor yr Haf The Summer Term Work Programme

[11] **Helen Mary Jones:** We have received the paper on the proposed summer term work programme. Are there any comments or questions on the programme?

[12] **Christine Chapman:** I welcome the inclusion of child poverty in the programme. We said that it would be good to include Huw Lewis's group in the discussion, but I was not sure where that was meant to be included.

[13] **Mr Jackson:** We do not have that scheduled in, but we could look to have it later in the programme.

[14] **Helen Mary Jones:** We can arrange it informally with Huw Lewis in any case, but it would be useful if I were to write to him formally as Chair, and if were to get that done by the beginning of next week.

[15] **Lynne Neagle:** I personally think that it should be included earlier in the programme,

so that we could get a perspective on the work that has been done so far from the person who drew up the action plan.

[16] **Helen Mary Jones:** I think that that is a valuable suggestion. Given that we have already made approaches to all those organisations, if Members are content, I would like us to stick with that for our meeting on Thursday, 24 April. We were considering whether it was the right time to see the Bevan Foundation and Funky Dragon, so perhaps we could see whether Huw Lewis is available on 8 May, and move the other organisations down a bit. We were hoping that the voluntary organisations and the Welsh Local Government Association may be able to raise issues with us that will help us to focus on what we want to do.

[17] **Lynne Neagle:** I have a different point. Our meeting on 24 April has been given the heading 'Scoping meeting on child poverty' in the forward work programme. However, I thought that we had decided that we would review the implementation so far of the Assembly Government's child poverty action plan. We have decided what we will review, and the future direction is for the expert group to decide; otherwise we will be talking about a hefty piece of work.

[18] **Helen Mary Jones:** Yes, and one that would be cross-cutting. I was hoping that we would get to hear of particular implementation issues so far that those organisations are worried about, because it will still be a broad programme even if we look only at implementation so far. Members will have their own views about what we should focus on, but we thought that it might be helpful to receive advice from those organisations about any concerns that they may have about what has gone on so far. In making arrangements for the meetings, we can double check that they understand that that is what we are looking for, and not for them to look forward at this point.

[19] **Mr Jackson:** We have indicated to those groups that the particular focus will be on implementation so far, and perhaps the gaps between the policy being formulated and its impact on the ground. They have indicated that they are happy with that, and that they would still want to have some input.

[20] **Helen Mary Jones:** Are Members happy with that? I see that you are. So, we will be asking them to help us to ask the right questions within that scope. Is everyone content with the programme as laid out at present? With flexibility, we can always revise as we go through, depending on the issues that are raised. That concludes item 2.

1.24 p.m.

Y Cynllun Gweithredu Rhianta The Parenting Action Plan

[21] **Helen Mary Jones:** We have received suggestions around the committee inquiry into the parenting action plan. I had an informal meeting with the Minister yesterday, and she welcomes the fact that we will look at it at this stage. She feels that it would be particularly useful for her to have our input as she decides on the next steps in promoting good parenting. I was pleased that we got a good response from her—though I hasten to add that Government Ministers do not have any influence over what we do or do not discuss. However, it is nice to know that the Minister feels that we are being helpful on this occasion, with the timing.

[22] Are there any comments or suggestions on the paper from the committee service that is in front of us, on the proposed consultation letter, and particularly on the list of consultees? We have already thought of a few, but I am sure that there will be others.

[23] **Christine Chapman:** I am sure that this will come up anyway, but should we invite

Children are Unbeatable?

[24] **Helen Mary Jones:** We should definitely ask for written evidence, and I am sure that we will want to talk to the organisation about the parenting work and the alternatives to physical punishment that we have been talking about.

[25] **Eleanor Burnham:** Are there any other organisations that we might not be aware of? I can think of an independent organisation—I am trying to remember its name—in Flintshire, run by Edna Speed, and I think that the patron is the Duchess of Westminster. It is heavily involved with caring for families. I am desperately trying to remember the name of the organisation. How will such organisations find out?

[26] **Helen Mary Jones:** This will go on the website, but perhaps we should also ask Children in Wales, as the umbrella body, to ensure that it feeds this down to local organisations. If you can give us the title of that organisation, Eleanor, we can approach it directly, and if anyone else knows of valid local organisations that we ought to go to—

[27] **Mr Jackson:** We have also indicated in the consultation letter that those that we have sent the letter to are welcome to send it on to any other organisation that they feel might be useful to be included.

[28] **Lynne Neagle:** I am happy with the list of consultees, with the addition that Chris made. In the terms of reference, it states:

[29] ‘Scrutinise what the Welsh Assembly Government is doing to continue its work on parenting’.

[30] Could that not say, ‘continue and develop’, because we might get new ideas? I am particularly keen to look at good practice elsewhere. There has been some interesting, targeted work on parenting over the border—there are special areas there, are there not? I know that not everyone agrees with the approach, or the way that it has been portrayed in the press, but, at its heart, it is well-intentioned, good, targeted work, and it would be good to look at that as well to see whether there are any examples of good practice that we can use here.

[31] **Helen Mary Jones:** That might be something that we could ask the research service to do, in terms of work that might be going on in England, Scotland and Ireland, and also, Chris, I know that you have seen interesting work on some of your visits in your previous guises, so we might want to pick up on that as well.

[32] **Eleanor Burnham:** I was going to make that point. Chris is well up to speed on this, and Scandinavia is another example to consider.

[33] **Helen Mary Jones:** Perhaps we can ask the research service. I am thinking in particular about the countries that have introduced a ban on public punishment: the kind of positive parenting work that was done to make that acceptable might be something else that we could learn from. In terms of the consultation letter, where we are talking about the delivery of the parenting action plan, if it is already present by implication, and not needed, that is fine, but do we need to ask specifically whether the parenting support is getting to the parents that need it most? Apart from people who end up with some sort of compulsory parenting order, perhaps connected with an anti-social behaviour order being placed on a child, my worry is that it is not necessarily the most vulnerable parents who would always have the confidence to even ask the question. I may be completely wrong about that, but the organisations on the ground will be able to tell us about that and also about what sort of mixture of people are taking advantage of parenting courses and things such as that. It might

be useful to see what the organisations can tell us about the reach of this. Is it available to all parents? Is it seen as stigmatising, if you decide to go along? I would have loved to have had access to a parenting group when my little girl was a toddler, but do people in some communities think that you only have to do that if you are a bad parent, and what can be done to overcome that? So, perhaps we should ask whether it is accessible to all parents, and whether it is getting to the parents who might most need such support.

[34] **Eleanor Burnham:** Are we including GPs, health visitors and nurses?

[35] **Helen Mary Jones:** I do not think that we have done so in our list of consultees. I think that we should include the British Medical Association and the Royal College of Nursing and ask about it, because the RCN has a division for midwives and health visitors.

1.30 p.m.

[36] **Eleanor Burnham:** We should also ask any organisation, voluntary or otherwise, that is associated with antenatal care. In my day, we used to go to something called the childbirth trust, or something like that, and we had breastfeeding—

[37] **Helen Mary Jones:** It is the National Childbirth Trust. The groups of mums who get together often carry on long beyond the breastfeeding stage.

[38] **Eleanor Burnham:** We should even ask playgroups—

[39] **Helen Mary Jones:** Could I have a look, Tom, at what groups we added during the informal meeting?

[40] We thought that we ought to ask the Wales Pre-school Playgroups Association and Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin.

[41] **Eleanor Burnham:** We could ask any nurseries, independent or otherwise, because there must be a lot of them.

[42] **Helen Mary Jones:** There are lots of them. I do not know the extent of any membership, but maybe we could find out whether there is a federal body that represents private nurseries. I do not know whether there is one, but we can try, and see what we can find out. The Mothers' Union is mentioned in this list, but I am aware that the Women's Institute and Merched y Wawr groups often get involved with young mums, teaching things such as cooking skills and nursery rhymes and so on, and therefore we thought that we might include them as well.

[43] **Eleanor Burnham:** Why not include the young farmers' clubs, for goodness' sake? [*Laughter.*]

[44] **Helen Mary Jones:** I am not quite sure that I see the relevance, but I suppose that there would be no harm in it.

[45] **Lynne Neagle:** I was just wondering about Home-Start as well, because it provides targeted support, does it not? I know that there are not that many groups around, but there are some scattered about.

[46] **Helen Mary Jones:** We can find them. The more people that we can make aware of this and ask to give evidence, and the broader the scope, the better. Is there anything else that anyone has thought of? Is Children in Wales on this list officially? It must be.

[47] **Eleanor Burnham:** We could even ask the BMA or—

[48] **Helen Mary Jones:** Yes, we have included the BMA and the Royal College of Nursing. We will ask the royal college particularly to refer it to its health visitors and midwives' group.

[49] **Eleanor Burnham:** The other thing that struck me concerns any kind of homecare provided by the local authority. Is that covered?

[50] **Helen Mary Jones:** We may need to look at the organisations that work with disabled children. We have included SNAP Cymru for those with special educational needs, but there are other organisations that work with disabled children and their families. Obviously, parenting a disabled child has particular challenges, whether that disability is physical or relates to behavioural problems and so on. Perhaps we can ask the Members' research service to have a think about those sorts of organisations as well.

[51] **Christine Chapman:** I know that the directors of education are included, but are we also thinking about the education of younger people and raising issues about the importance of parenting? From that angle, I am not just thinking about parenting classes when people are parents, but about before that. I think that this is about the whole ethos and the value of parenting.

[52] **Helen Mary Jones:** On parenting education and so on, we have included the children and young people's partnerships and some of the voluntary organisations, such as Barnardo's, which I know do some of that work. Can you think of other organisations?

[53] **Christine Chapman:** I was thinking about whether it is in the curriculum. Is it looked at as an issue, for example, when young people are in school?

[54] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yes. You are talking about personal and social education.

[55] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, possibly. We need to raise the value of parenting and stress how important it is.

[56] **Helen Mary Jones:** Let us think about whether we can include that in the consultation letter so that we can make clear to the directors of education that we are asking about parenting education specifically, not just for people who are parents already, but for the upcoming generation.

[57] **Eleanor Burnham:** When I was dealing with the disaffected across north-east Wales, there was a body called Health Promotion Wales that helped me greatly with equipment and the wherewithal to do with drugs and so on, which was an input into PSE and discussed parenting and all of those kinds of issues.

[58] **Helen Mary Jones:** As an organisation, Health Promotion Wales was one of the quangos that has been taken in—

[59] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yes, I know, but I was just saying that I do not know—

[60] **Helen Mary Jones:** We need to look at the health promotion organisations to see what they are doing as well. I think that that was a useful comment. Are there any other suggestions on the consultation letter, the paper or the list of consultees?

[61] **Eleanor Burnham:** What do you think about the last paragraph, Chair, and the invitation to contribute? We had a discussion yesterday about broadband and I am always

concerned that an awful lot of people do not have the ability, for whatever reason, to contact us electronically. We are not putting people off, are we? I know that it says, 'if possible'.

[62] **Helen Mary Jones:** If we were going out to consult the public, Eleanor, I would agree with you, but I think that most of these organisations, by now, will probably find it easier to do these sorts of things electronically. If we were doing a community consultation, I would agree with you, because there are access issues, for example with older people getting access, and also around people who cannot get broadband at all. There are also gender issues about who in a household gets access, because although the household may have broadband, it does not mean that the women and girls are getting access to it.

[63] **Eleanor Burnham:** As I said yesterday, I am certainly not IT-literate, but I have never seen rich text format before. Is that the generally accepted format?

[64] **Helen Mary Jones:** It is. I think that the approach is fine for this purpose, but if we were ever doing something that involved the public more, I think that you would be right and we would need to think of another route. Of course, this is just asking if they want additional information; it is not saying that that is the way that they have to submit information.

[65] **Christine Chapman:** Are there any thoughts on grandparents or other generations, because many grandparents get involved, particularly in Wales, with parenting, and I just wondered whether there is an organisation that we could approach.

[66] **Helen Mary Jones:** We could have a look to see what we find.

[67] **Christine Chapman:** There could be an organisation, because I think that that is an issue as well.

[68] **Helen Mary Jones:** I am sure that there would be some local organisations, if not a national one.

[69] **Eleanor Burnham:** Or Age Concern and Help the Aged? There are probably issues. I think that is a good point.

[70] **Helen Mary Jones:** I think that they might wonder why they were being consulted, but it is certainly worth a try, and so we will certainly see whether we could find some local groups. In doing that, we will have to be cautious because there are some groups that campaign for grandparents' rights if relationships break down or when a child is taken into care, and while those groups have valid and legitimate concerns, that might not fit with this focus. So, if we find some organisations, we need to check what their focus is, and that it would be relevant to this. I do not want us to get distracted.

[71] **Angela Burns:** I agree with you 100 per cent. This action plan is for the primary carers of children, otherwise we will just involve everyone in the world in this.

[72] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yes, but we should give people the opportunity. They might not come on board, but I think that Chris has made a valid point. I am sure that it is only a small proportion of those parenting, but they are people who are parenting as grandparents.

[73] **Christine Chapman:** There are actually a lot of—

[74] **Helen Mary Jones:** Many grandparents provide care when the parents are in work, even if it is not—

[75] **Christine Chapman:** I was one myself.

[76] **Helen Mary Jones:** We will probably find, in our approaches to some of the organisations such as the Mothers' Union and Women's Institute, that many of the members will be grandparents who care for children part time. So that it is relevant, but we need to focus and not start talking about grandparents' rights when it comes to divorce and things such as that. That was my point. I know of some such organisations, which I hugely respect, but which would not necessarily have a perspective on this.

[77] Are there any other questions, comments or suggestions on the parenting action plan papers? Are you, Tom and Claire, happy that you know what we are doing?

[78] **Mr Jackson:** Yes, I think so.

[79] **Helen Mary Jones:** Good, and thank you and Members' research service as usual for preparing the work for us. I genuinely do not know what we would do without you all.

[80] **Eleanor Burnham:** I do not think that I have the paper that you showed me a minute ago. Is there a spare copy?

[81] **Helen Mary Jones:** I am sure that we could get you spare copies. Perhaps you could see Claire or Tom afterwards, so that we can make sure that we know what you need copies of.

[82] I see that there is nothing further. I thank Members for their comments, and I am sure that we can take that forward now. I think that this must be one of the shortest committee meetings on record.

[83] **Angela Burns:** After the last one—[*Inaudible*].

[84] **Helen Mary Jones:** It only goes to show—we have had some comments about this being an all-female committee, but we do get things done.

[85] Claire has just asked whether we want to see the consultation letter and the list of consultees again before it goes out, or should we just issue it. I see that you are happy with that.

[86] **Mr Jackson:** We set a date of Friday, 20 June for the responses.

[87] **Helen Mary Jones:** That seems sensible and it should give people sufficient time.

[88] Thank you all for being here. Our next meeting, as you know, is on 24 April, when we will decide where exactly we will focus in the child poverty work. Thank you.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 1.40 p.m.
The meeting ended at 1.40 p.m.*