



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

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

**Dydd Iau, 27 Tachwedd 2008
Thursday, 27 November 2008**

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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi 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
Ann Jones	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Lynne Neagle) Labour (substitute for Lynne Neagle)
Helen Mary Jones	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Committee Chair)

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Suzanne Chisholm	Pennaeth y Gangen Hawliau, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Head of Rights and Entitlements Branch, Welsh Assembly Government
Yr Athro/Professor Judy Hutchings Jane Hutt	Canolfan Blynyddoedd Anhygoel Cymru, Prifysgol Bangor Incredible Years Wales Centre, Bangor University Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau) Assembly Member, Labour (the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills)
David Middleton	Pennaeth y Gangen Gweithio mewn Partneriaeth, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Head of Partnership Working Branch, Welsh Assembly Government
Elizabeth Williams	Pennaeth yr Is-adran Strategaeth Plant a Phobl Ifanc, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Head of Children and Young People's Strategy Division, Welsh Assembly Government

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

Tom Jackson	Clerc Clerk
Rita Phillips	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Kathryn Potter	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau Members' Research Service
Helen Roberts	Ymgynghorydd Cyfreithiol i'r Pwyllgor Legal Adviser to the Committee

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 8.59 a.m.
The meeting began at 8.59 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Helen Mary Jones:** Bore da, **Helen Mary Jones:** Good morning, friends,
 gyfeillion, a chroeso i'r cyfarfod hwn o'r and welcome to this meeting of the Children
 Pwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc. Mae croeso and Young People Committee. You are free

ichi siarad yn Gymraeg neu yn Saesneg. Mae offer cyfieithu ar gael, ac mae modd eu defnyddio i glywed y sain yn well. Gofynnaf i'r cyhoedd ac i'r Aelodau ddiffodd pob ffôn symudol neu ddyfais electronig arall. Nid yw'n ddigon da eu tawelu, gan eu bod yn amharu ar yr offer cyfieithu a darlledu. Nid ydym yn disgwyl ymarfer tân, felly os clywn larwm, bydd argyfwng go iawn a gofynnaf i chi ddilyn cyfarwyddyd y tywysyddion.

to speak in Welsh or in English. Translation equipment is available, which can also be used to amplify the sound. I ask the public and Members to switch off mobile phones or any other electronic device. It is not good enough to put them on silent mode, as they interfere with the translation and broadcasting equipment. We do not expect a fire drill, so, if an alarm sounds, it will be a genuine emergency, and I ask you to follow the ushers' direction.

[2] A oes gan Aelodau unrhyw fuddiant i'w ddatgan? Gwelaif nad oes.

Do Members have any interests to declare? I see that you do not.

[3] Mae ymddiheuriad cyson gan Lynne Neagle, wrth gwrs, a chroeso eto i Ann Jones. Gwerthfawrogwn ei phresenoldeb cyson yn y pwyllgor. Mae'n gwneud ein gwaith yn haws o lawer na phe baem yn gorfod croesawu Aelod gwahanol bob wythnos. Cafwyd ymddiheuriadau hefyd gan Christine Chapman a deallaf fod Angela Burns yn gorfod gadael yn gynnar. Diolch i Angela am ein hysbysu o hynny.

We receive a regular apology from Lynne Neagle, of course, and we welcome Ann Jones again. We appreciate her continued appearance in the committee. It makes our work much easier than if we had to welcome a different Member every week. We have also received apologies from Christine Chapman, and I understand that Angela Burns has to leave early. I thank Angela for warning us of that.

9.01 a.m.

Adolygiad Blynyddol Comisiynydd Plant Cymru 2007-08 The Children's Commissioner for Wales Annual Review 2007-08

[4] **Helen Mary Jones:** Mae gennym lawer o waith i'w wneud y bore yma. Croesawaf y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau, Jane Hutt. Diolchaf i'r Gweinidog am roi gymaint o'i hamser i ni y bore yma. Mae gennym ddwy ran fawr o waith i'w trafod gyda'r Gweinidog ac yr ydym yn hynod o ddiolchgar ei bod yn gallu rhoi cymaint o'i hamser inni.

Helen Mary Jones: We have a lot of work to do this morning. I welcome the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Jane Hutt. I thank the Minister for giving so much of her time to us this morning. We have two major pieces of work to cover with the Minister and we are extremely grateful that she can give so much of her time to us.

[5] Trown, felly, yn syth at y cwestiynau.

Let us turn straight to questions.

[6] We are starting with the scrutiny of the Minister on issues arising from the children's commissioner's report. So, we will touch on a wide range of issues, some of which will be overarching and some of which will be specific to your education portfolio. We then have a set of specific questions relating to other Ministers' portfolios, although we fully accept that you may need to consult with colleagues and get back to us. We thought that it was reasonable to explore them all with you given your overarching role as Minister for children. I hope that that is acceptable to you.

[7] I will begin with a question about resources, because the commissioner has a wide remit and extensive powers, but he has a budget smaller than that of most secondary schools

in Wales, as he points out. Are you satisfied that the funding that the commissioner receives is adequate for him to do the job?

[8] **The Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (Jane Hutt):** I am pleased to be with you this morning. On that question, this budget was prepared for the three-year period of the spending review, so although it covers total operational costs for the financial year 2008-09, it has been set for 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10, and it has been set at the 2007-08 level. The estimate is set at £1.837 million, which includes staffing and other revenue costs. However, there is a £201,000 increase on the budget set from 2006-07, so the uplift was for the three-year period.

[9] I know that the commissioner has raised issues about budgets. I will meet him next week when I will discuss these issues with him. He recognises that he has to be strategic, as do we, in using that budget effectively. I hope to explore these issues with him in our meeting. However, I feel confident, particularly as a result of his excellent annual report, that he is getting to grips with his role, and taking a strategic view of how he can use his resources most effectively.

[10] **Helen Mary Jones:** You will be aware that the commissioner is cautious about asking for additional resources because, as he said to this committee, if he argues for additional resources for his office and they end up coming out of front-line services for children, that puts him in an invidious position. However, our feeling as a committee is that it seems a bit unreasonable to ask the children's commissioner to be more proactive and strategic in driving forward the children's rights agenda with a flat-line budget, which, to all intents and purposes, is a cut. I am pleased to hear that you will be having further discussions with him about that. Although, quite rightly, he was not able to give us any details, he did speak of his plans for restructuring and reshaping his office and the way in which it is staffed, and he will be consulting with his team to ensure a more strategic response. As a committee, we are concerned that there may be costs involved in that process. The commissioner would be doing what we all need him to do, namely looking at these things and working strategically. In your discussions with him, will you ensure that you explore any extra costs that that process may incur? Will the Assembly Government consider whether it can give the commissioner's office some support, to ensure that those costs are met?

[11] **Jane Hutt:** I certainly will. In many ways, wherever the money comes from in the budget, it will still come from the public purse. It is about priorities and ensuring that we are enabling him to do his job in the most effective way. That has to be a key point of our discussion next week, and I am sure that we will be able to feed back to you on that.

[12] **Helen Mary Jones:** We would be very grateful for any information, when you can share it. We are also aware that the commissioner is in the middle of a confidential process, and that we may therefore be a long way off knowing what the figures need to be.

[13] **Eleanor Burnham:** Minister, do you agree with the view that Welsh law, for example the forthcoming Measure on child poverty, should be explicitly framed with reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?

[14] **Jane Hutt:** The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child underpins all our policy making in the Assembly. It was adopted nearly 10 years ago, in the first Assembly, and it has also been adopted by the Welsh Assembly Government. I do not know whether it is within our devolved powers to put it in our legislative framework, as it might be a reserved matter. Suzanne, do you want to comment on that?

[15] **Ms Chisholm:** We are taking legal advice on the best and most effective way of incorporating the convention into Welsh law, and we are also working with our partners

across the UK, as the state party, with regard to English law. So, there will be more on this in the next few months, Minister, and we will be providing you with advice on that.

[16] **Eleanor Burnham:** Do you agree with the children's commissioner's view that the UN convention should be incorporated into domestic law, and have you made any representation to the UK Government on that matter?

[17] **Jane Hutt:** As Suzanne's answer indicates, we are discussing that at the moment.

[18] **Eleanor Burnham:** I was not sure whether that meant with Government or—

[19] **Jane Hutt:** We will be discussing it with our partners in the UK Government as well as with our own legal advisers.

[20] **Eleanor Burnham:** That is what I wanted to know.

[21] **Jane Hutt:** I can assure you absolutely that that is the direction in which we are going in our discussions.

[22] **Helen Mary Jones:** Are you in a position to tell us how those representations are being received by the UK Government at this stage?

[23] **Jane Hutt:** Suzanne is engaged on this at official level. The matter is progressing, but we are not at a point at which we can feed anything positive back. I will discuss this with colleagues at a UK ministerial level. I am discussing issues with Beverley Hughes, the Minister of State for Children, Young People and Families. We need to identify a way forward and ask for a response. I do not think that there is any more that we can report meaningfully today.

[24] **Ms Chisholm:** To add to what the Minister has said, we do have a fundamental difficulty in that the Welsh Assembly Government's and the National Assembly for Wales's approach to the convention is quite different from that of Her Majesty's Government at Westminster. We are all committed to taking forward the convention in whatever way we can. The Westminster Government is taking an approach that is based less on rights and more on children's and young people's wellbeing. That creates some difficulty when you are making law.

9.10 a.m.

[25] **Eleanor Burnham:** We had some interesting comments from the children's commissioner on that very point. If I remember correctly, his comments alluded to the fact that it was much easier for him to do his job here than it was for the children's commissioner in England to do his, because of our progressive way of thinking and operating, and perhaps the closeness to the Minister and senior officials.

[26] **Helen Mary Jones:** We will come onto the challenge around the issues relating to practice as opposed to policy. Perhaps this is a good point for you to ask your question, Ann.

[27] **Ann Jones:** Thank you; yes, it is. The commissioner says that the differences between policy and practice are persistent, although the commitment from politicians, policy-makers and professionals is genuine. He then went on to tell us that, while we in Wales have all of the policies and strategies, are talking the talk, and seem to be doing quite well, if he was honest, in response to the question of whether we have made a difference to the lives of vulnerable children, his answer would be that we probably have not. Do you accept the view

of the commissioner with regard to whether there is a huge gap between policy and practice?

[28] **Jane Hutt:** I am pleased that he has raised this as a key issue. He calls it the ‘reality gap’ between policy intent and delivery. I know that you will have heard me say more than once in committee and in the Chamber that we are looking for the outcomes. However, we also have to recognise that some of the programmes and policies that we have developed are new and make a fairly long-term strategic change to the lives of children and young people.

[29] I will mention two or three things that are steering us in order to give you more evidence of delivery. What is crucial is that delivery often lies in the hands of others such as local authorities, the health service and all the agents who are out there delivering on our policies. Whatever we do, we have to do it to engage them in this delivery outcome-focused agenda. I met the WLGA yesterday, and the tenor of my speech to it was that we have to move forward together in partnership on outcomes and with regard to what we can deliver together.

[30] We have a framework for measuring outcomes, which has been developed over the last three years, called ‘Demonstrating Success’, because that is what we need to do. In simple terms, it is demonstrating the success of our policies for children and young people. Obviously, you then have to have a framework to show how we can do that to promote good practice. You will know that, last week, we published the children and young people’s wellbeing monitor for Wales. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child asks us to collect data so that we have a baseline against which we can be judged on the outcomes for children and young people. We now have that baseline. You will have seen it and you will, therefore, know that there are some challenging statistics about the lives of children and young people in Wales. It starts to highlight key trends and issues that we need to address. We will publish the next monitor in three years’ time and we can see what progress we have made.

[31] It goes back to the way in which we work with our partners, particularly local authorities. The key strategies for that work are the children and young people’s plans. These have been published, and there is more information about these in the next section on the parenting action plan, which I am sure you have already looked at. We need to see how they can work with us to deliver the outcomes of our policies. I welcome it. That is our agenda; I am glad that it is his agenda, and we can rightly and appropriately be scrutinised on it. However, the impact of some of the changes will be seen only in the long-term.

[32] I am sure that you have picked up how interesting it is, and how already in schools, in areas where Flying Start has been implemented—and it is not that long since it was implemented—teachers say that they can see the difference that it is making when children enter school at the foundation phase. This is all anecdotal, and we cannot just rely on anecdotal evidence; on delivery, we must have hard facts, outcomes and evaluations. I hope that I have made it clear that I am committed to this. We have frameworks in place and we are moving on in a much more mature way towards demonstrating that our policies are delivering.

[33] **Ann Jones:** I wish to come back on that. No-one, including the commissioner, doubts your commitment, and I realise that we have given them all the carrots, but occasionally the stick must come out as well. Do you have any powers if children and young people’s plans are not delivering or if the plans are aspirational rather than practical? What power does the Assembly Government have to go in to make sure that vulnerable children are not being let down by some local authorities or agencies?

[34] **Jane Hutt:** That takes us to the legislation that we are now taking forward, and the vulnerable children and child poverty Measures that emanate from that. Elizabeth, do you

want to say anything on this?

[35] **Ms Williams:** We have a number of levers, and I think that the most important issue is that we are committed to doing this. We need to make use of the data that we have in the monitor, much of which is also available at a local level, so that we have proper benchmarks that say, 'This is where you are now; this is where we all want to be'. We know that there is work to do as part of the bigger outcomes framework to ensure that we are using the same data at each level and that we are, in effect, holding each other to account on that. So, there is some work on that. We also need to work in partnership with the regulators, because we have Estyn, the Wales Audit Office and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales, with which we would want to work to ensure that that whole process is moving forward. All of that will be supported by the Measure, which will actually place a duty on local authorities. So, between all those things, I think that we have some very significant levers and a very significant commitment to saying that we all want to make this work. We will have the evidence on whether or not it is working and we will be able to hold people to account where it is not working.

[36] **Ann Jones:** What happens in three year's time when we look at the tools again and we find that the statistics are the same, or the number of vulnerable children or those whom we have tried to help has only fallen fractionally? I know that there will always be more coming into the equation, but if we fail vulnerable children now and we are still failing them three years down the line, that is not much comfort, is it? It does not matter what the action plan is, there is not much comfort for those children and their families. What are we going to do to prevent the figures from increasing? We all think that the index of multiple deprivation is fantastic for plotting where we should be putting in resources. In my own authority, we have seen some wards going backwards, and everyone has sat there and said, 'Three years ago we had this number, and now we have this number'. In the meantime, the whole community has been let down. The action plans are there, but the people have been let down. I am after some real and tangible evidence that it is going to work.

[37] **Jane Hutt:** I mentioned legislation because I think that it is very important to underpin this. Under the vulnerable children and child poverty legislative competence Order that has gone through and the power transferred, there are duties on local authorities. We have not mentioned the child poverty duty yet, but I am sure that that will come through. We have already consulted on placing a duty on public agencies and authorities that will match guidance under which Cymorth has been provided to provide free childcare places and other early years services in specific places. That will feed into the Measure that is coming forward from Government. I think that we may be moving on to the issue of child poverty, but we are also taking forward a child poverty proofing of strategic policies and programmes, because we have a policy gateway tool, as part of the child poverty implementation plan. It will be a mixture of not just guidance, but duties, through legislation and regulation.

9.20 a.m.

[38] I do think, as Liz said, that it is very important that we look at the role of the CSSIW and Estyn in relation to regulation and inspection. One important tool that local authorities have, if you look at their responsibilities under the national service framework for children, young people and maternity services, is their own self-assessment tool. It is very interesting that that tool has identified very clearly for them where they are failing to implement targets in the national service framework. I think that we also have to look at supporting and enabling local authorities and delivery agencies to consider how they can take responsibility for that self-assessment of progress on delivery of our programmes. So, it is going to be a combination of levers, legislation, guidance, regulation and inspection. Delivery is about the exchange of good practice as well, not reinventing the wheel. When we come on to the parenting action plan, we see some examples of local authorities trying to drive the agenda of

change and excellence across Wales, which is really one of the key routes to deliver our policies.

[39] **Helen Mary Jones:** I am sure that we will want to return to these issues, Minister. It seems to some of us that we have been saying some of these things for nearly 10 years, but as Ann Jones rightly points out, according to some of the measures of outcomes for vulnerable children, things are getting worse not better, despite our best intentions. However, we will move on now.

[40] **Angela Burns:** Good morning, Minister. I want to talk to you about unofficial exclusions from school. When the committee asked the Children's Commissioner for Wales if he was satisfied that the Assembly Government and local authorities were acting on the recommendations in the commissioner's unofficial exclusions report of 2004, he responded with a clear 'no'. I actually want to read to you what he said because he did not just say 'no'; he also said:

[41] 'Unofficial exclusions are still going on and I am concerned about it because it is collusion. There are still discussions going on between schools and parents with the schools saying something like, 'You know that it is not in his interest for him to come back here'. That is still happening. We still might not get to hear about it until someone has been out of education for six months or more.'

[42] That is very concerning and I was just wondering about your response to this and what you believe that the Welsh Assembly Government and the local authorities could do about it.

[43] **Jane Hutt:** This goes back to quite a lot of important debate and discussion that we had earlier this year, particularly around the publication of the national behaviour and attendance review. That review highlighted a lot of issues, including unofficial or illegal exclusions, as well as a whole range of strategies that we need to take forward to deal with behaviour and attendance. I reported in July that I had written to all schools and local authorities to focus their attention on the issue of unofficial and illegal exclusions. I said, prior to any kind of action plan on the behaviour review, that we had to tackle this. I drew attention to that key recommendation and I referred the schools and local authorities to our guidance on exclusion from schools and pupil referral units, which is a circular. I asked them to adhere to the guidance in that circular. In my letter in July, I also promoted the fact that there are opportunities in the managed moves process, which has worked for pupils and has worked, importantly, for schools co-operating. It has been highly effective. The circular and the regulations are there and we need to guide schools to make sure, as the children's commissioner said, that we tackle these issues. We are now working on the action plan of the national behaviour and attendance review. I am sure that this will be a key part of the action plan to take forward, and I hope that the July letter is making a difference.

[44] **Angela Burns:** It is of concern to the committee that there still appear to be unofficial exclusions despite the best intentions of Government. Can the Government do anything more to ensure that it is not just guidance that people may or may not choose to follow, but that it is emphatically stated that they must not exclude children unofficially? If schools are going to exclude them, we need to know about it and why.

[45] Also, do you agree with Keith Towler's view, which is also my view and, I think, that of the committee, that if we were to adopt the UN convention into law, it would strengthen the position on unofficial exclusions and make the problem go away?

[46] **Jane Hutt:** There are several other means of tackling this problem. We are working on the action plan from the behaviour and attendance review. We must also recognise that this

is about how we work with schools to enable them to handle this effectively, and that goes down to issues such as support and training for staff. In fact, key recommendations from the national behaviour and attendance review relate to behaviour management training in schools. One does not want to be anecdotal as a Minister, but last night I spoke at an awards achievement ceremony at a Caerphilly comprehensive school, and the headteacher reported with pride the fact that he had reduced exclusions during his time as headteacher. That shows the kind of leadership that we need, but it goes back to good practice, training and support for schools. We have to recognise that we have to support, steer and guide schools through this, and we can do that through the school effectiveness framework that is now in operation, as it looks at the whole school, which includes behaviour management.

[47] I will be discussing this with the children's commissioner in relation to what more we can do through policy and practice, as well as through regulation.

[48] **Helen Mary Jones:** Please be brief, Angela, as Eleanor Burnham wants to ask a supplementary question on this.

[49] **Angela Burns:** To make sure that I am absolutely clear, are you happier to use the mechanisms that you have in place and improve them rather than adopting the convention into law?

[50] **Jane Hutt:** No, absolutely not.

[51] **Angela Burns:** I was not quite sure, so I just wanted to clarify the matter.

[52] **Jane Hutt:** As I said earlier, we are working on the UN convention to ensure that we can include it in our legal basis. I was responding more to the issue of how we deliver better. We can have the policy and the legislation, but we have to know how we can help or facilitate our partners to deliver on that. I am sure that you will have a robust discussion with the profession about how we deliver this if it is in legislation, in whatever form. It is the 'how' that we have to address, as well as ensuring that we have underpinned it with legislation.

[53] **Eleanor Burnham:** You probably remember that I used to work with excluded youngsters across north-east Wales. We have taken information and testimony from various people—Professor Egan talked about the transitional phase from primary to secondary and how, if people are in a bad way in primary school, they will be far worse when they transfer. I hope that you will agree that it is the early identification of and intervention on behalf of these pupils that should be your first priority. Your second priority, which you rightly alluded to, should be the staff training in behaviour management. With the best will in the world, teachers do not want to cope with these children if they do not have the resources.

9.30 a.m.

[54] Are you happy that enough funding is going towards doing these two things? They are the key, and I do not think that the wheel needs reinventing, because we know that there are pupil referral units. In Professor Shirley Williams's recent address, state boarding schools were discussed for the worst pupils. Are you convinced that you have put enough resources into early identification and intervention and into staff training in behaviour management, because I cannot see that we have made that much progress since the days when I used to do this work?

[55] **Jane Hutt:** You are right in that it goes back to how we deliver this. On early intervention, I have mentioned Flying Start already this morning, which targets, before they go to school, the most disadvantaged children and young people on a family basis, and that is so much more powerful, because whatever you do with a child, that child is part of a family,

and the family's socioeconomic circumstances have a bearing. There is the early intervention of Flying Start, the health visitor support, the parenting programme, as well as a lot of the work that is being done with the basic skills programmes, which we will go on to in the next piece of evidence about parenting—parenting is also crucial to this—and then we move into the foundation phase and the adult-to-pupil ratio. So, there is identification of children's additional learning needs and issues that often have an impact on behaviour at that very early stage, which gives a good basis for support through the rest of their school years.

[56] Transition is critical and things can go wrong without effective transition. The work that is now being done on transition is much more rigorous, and what we are doing on transition in Wales is well respected. You will also know about the work that is done on catchment areas with secondary school children engaging in the transition as buddies, with year 7s going into primary schools, and all the other work that has been done. There were many examples of that last week, during the tackling bullying week, and you heard about how this is being addressed as a key issue, because children can lose confidence, which can lead to bullying and difficult environments. All these issues have an impact on behaviour in the classroom, do they not? If an authority is effective in managing these issues and supporting schools, and if pupil referral units are playing an appropriate part, I am sure that, like me, you will know that some children can benefit from spending time in a pupil referral unit, or even, in a managed way, receiving additional support in the school setting for a time, and quickly return to the mainstream. Issues might be identified and particular personalised support might be given that would enable that pupil to come back and settle into the mainstream.

[57] There are so many strategies that are working that what we have to do—and this returns to the first point—is to ensure that where it works, everyone is doing it, and that we exchange best practice across Wales. It is about early intervention, as you said, and the effective management of difficult pupils, the training of staff and transition. All these things are happening now, but they will be strategically addressed in the action plan from the behaviour and attendance review. We have also put money into the budget for implementing the action plan, so resources are available as well as all the resources that we have put into supporting the profession at the sharp end, as we speak.

[58] **Helen Mary Jones:** We are bound to want to return to the issue of unofficial exclusions, because it is an issue of concern to the committee, but we need to move on. I remind Members that we have an awful lot to do in the next hour or so with the Minister, so we should try to make our questions as tight as we can, and the answers too, where possible, although these are complex issues.

[59] **Eleanor Burnham:** The issue of school loos is close to my heart—it is not just train loos. Seriously, you will probably remember that I referred to them in yesterday's debate. The annual reports by the children's commissioner regularly remind us of the dire state of school loos, which, apart from anything else, can have a medical impact on young people. It means that children are not drinking, which affects their behaviour and their ability to learn. Are you satisfied with your response to this issue raised by the commissioner? It is a fundamental issue and, while it brings some hilarity, it is a matter of some gravitas too, and we cannot let it go on.

[60] **Jane Hutt:** I agree. I think that the commissioner was pleased when I responded to his report and said that we are doing work with the Welsh Local Government Association. We are undertaking a survey to assess the arrangements in place at local authority level and in schools to ensure that appropriate toilet facilities are available. The WLGA is overseeing the survey of school toilets, and that will inform a joint strategy involving the directors of education and Estyn, because we need to get this right. We are thinking about, for example, minimum standards for school toilets, which would be rolled out to local authorities and schools. That has already been agreed as a way forward.

[61] **Eleanor Burnham:** The bottom line is what we were discussing yesterday, namely the lack of school funding for capital projects, let alone for school toilets. How are you going to ensure that this very serious issue is addressed? We have been here for almost 10 years, and this is a very serious issue about a fundamental right.

[62] **Jane Hutt:** Having minimum standards is crucial. The very first report that Peter Clarke did mentioned school toilets, you may recall. He had gone out to speak to young people, and they said that school toilets were a problem. We have moved on in the sense that we are doing the review and we are going to have minimum standards. It is a key part of the asset management work that local authorities are required to do on their school estate, which includes school toilets, and it has certainly gone up the agenda with local authorities' plans for refurbishment, which is what it is about for a lot of schools—in new schools it is fantastic, because it has been addressed there. It is on the policy agenda properly and formally for us as Government in Wales and at local authority level, so we are now addressing it appropriately.

[63] **Helen Mary Jones:** Do you have an idea of when the minimum standards will be in place? What would the mechanism be for enforcing the minimum standards?

[64] **Jane Hutt:** I will have to come back to you on the timeline for the minimum standards. I would hope to be able to make a statement responding to the school toilets survey and issue, which would include a response on the capital programme.

[65] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you, Minister; that is helpful.

[66] **Angela Burns:** Another key issue that the commissioner identified was allowing children space and the facilities to play, and particularly to have free play, or outside play. Could you tell us what the Assembly Government is doing to ensure that children have play spaces that are adequate, accessible and challenging and safe, in the sense that the children can be there and no-one is going to put any pressures on them? Children have to be able to run around and fall over and jump in and out of things and get wet and all the usual stuff.

[67] **Jane Hutt:** Again, this has been a theme during the life of the Assembly. We in Wales developed the first play policy in the UK. We published the implementation plan for the policy back in 2006, and the play policy is now being implemented. It covers education, health, transport, leisure and safety, and it has very much steered the guidance on the spending of Cymorth funding by the children and young people's partnerships. Crucially, the new children and young people's plans require local authorities and their partners to provide secure play opportunities for children and young people. The guidance states that a wide range of partners including, for example, local authority planning and transport departments, need to be engaged in the support of children and young people's right to play. Open spaces, playgrounds, transport: it is all there in the policy, and we now have to deliver it with our partners on the ground.

9.40 a.m.

[68] **Angela Burns:** When we talk about play, we tend to think of little children, but bigger children also need space to go out and hang about. It is the right of every teenager to hang around. In my village, one of the places where they like to hang around is on the picnic benches outside one of the few post offices left in rural Wales. They are there every Friday, Saturday and Thursday—it is what they do. That leads to a negative stereotyping of children, particularly when it happens in a more urban setting. What could we do to ensure that children are allowed outside and can express themselves through play—just being kids? What can we do to get over this negative stereotyping of children and young people?

[69] **Jane Hutt:** That is crucial to children and young people's planning—their entitlement to play and outdoor leisure opportunities. It makes me think back to a former grant scheme through 'Climbing Higher' under the then Department for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport in the Assembly Government. The scheme provided funding, along with some lottery money, for a large number of multi-purpose, outside kick-about and play facilities. I am sure that you all know about the facilities in your own constituencies because of the announcements that have been made.

[70] Communities First is also important here, and those areas that have been identified as deprived have had funding for skate parks under one tranche of Communities First money over the past few years. That has been beneficial, as has the youth service policy. We recently held a youth work week, and committee members may have seen that we issued a directory of good practice on youth work, which referred to many good facilities. You can spend capital on such facilities, but it needs to be accompanied by supportive youth work. I will ensure that committee members receive a copy of that good practice document.

[71] Basically, the commitment is there for that age group. It is all part of recognising their rights and extending entitlement, and local authorities have to recognise that in their children and young people's plans.

[72] **Ann Jones:** I was pleased to hear you say that the planning authorities now have to be consulted and involved with children and young people's plans. That has been part of the problem—the lack of joined-up thinking. The policy on open access play is great, but you have to find open public spaces for it, and local development plans often do not reflect that. If local authorities are not aware of what land they own and cannot identify space for open play, the play policy fails. Open access play is important and you will know, as you have visited Rhyl Adventure Playground with me, that the work that goes on there is not just play—it is informal education, which is a real bonus. Again, it comes down to ensuring that planning authorities use the play policy as part of their negotiations, particularly when it comes to housing developments. It is crazy to put up a housing development and then try to put the play area in afterwards. The play area should go in first, and then you can tell people that, if they want a quiet life, they should not buy a house in that area—they should buy on the other side of the housing estate. Those are the issues that we need to address. How do you do that in a cross-cutting way?

[73] **Jane Hutt:** It goes back to how we steer local authorities to take this on board. The guidance for children and young people's plans is called 'Shared Planning for Better Outcomes', and it requires local authorities to work in this way. Therefore, it is a statutory duty and obligation that they engage with planning and transport departments. It is the role of the children and young people's partnerships to ensure that they have engaged. I am sure that the frustration felt by those steering the children and young people's partnerships, who often come from the children's and young people's professional focus, will relate to how they get planners, the housing department and developers on board. Again, this is something that we need to take back in order to consider the outcomes for the children and young people's plan in respect of these issues. As you say, you are missing opportunities to create open space for play in new developments.

[74] We also have a community-focused schools programme, and that is a source of funding. We have increased that funding. Much of that is about using the school as a focus for other activities. I know that what we are talking about now is not so much about using school facilities, but it can lead to the use of land around schools or as part of school provision for out-of-school, community and civic youth activity. Therefore, it is a much more joined-up government locally as well as nationally.

[75] **Helen Mary Jones:** I will very briefly bring in Angela Burns and Eleanor Burnham.

Members, we need to understand that we have four questions on issues outside the Minister's portfolio. I suggest that we move on, after this question, to the questions on the parenting action plan because I am keen for us to explore those. If we are then unable to come back to the three or four questions on things specific to other Ministers' portfolios, perhaps we could write to the Minister if Members are content, and if that is all right with you, Minister. I do not want us to lose the time for questions on the parenting action plan. I also ask that we try to be as focused as possible with questions.

[76] **Angela Burns:** One of the points that I was trying to make about negative stereotyping of young people and children is about how you or the Government may be able to use some of its capabilities to change that. I am not talking about the things that you could do, such as encouraging local authorities to build skate parks or to do whatever—I am not talking about the tangible stuff. I have no doubt about your commitment or the commitment of the people who work with children and young people to ensure that they have better facilities and so forth. What concerns me is this culture that we are building up in the country of being fairly pejorative towards children. Most people adore and cherish their own children or their nieces and nephews and so on, but when they see a group of children who are not associated with them—particularly older teenagers—there is this immediate withdrawal and a feeling that they are up to no good and that they are miscreants and so forth. It does not matter whether they come from the poorest housing development or whether they are comfortably middle class; if you talk to those children, you will find that they all feel that no-one particularly likes them and that society does not like them much. I know that it is a tricky question, but what can we do about the media or whatever? What could we do to help to change the culture and perceptions so that the social norm is a perception that children are okay and that they are not all mini-thugs waiting to bash us over the head or create trouble somewhere?

[77] **Jane Hutt:** I will bring Suzanne in on this, but I think that article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a key to this. This is about the participation of children and young people in all of the policies that we have discussed. We have gone through everything, from early intervention, behaviour management and so forth. We need to engage with our children and young people. In fact, we are held up in Wales as leading the way with our youth participation agenda, with Funky Dragon, and now with our national standards of participation—and are expecting all of our agents to participate. Underpinning everything that we do with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child requires not only our Government but providers and delivery agents to take this forward. I think that active participation is critical to that. You may want to say something, Suzanne.

[78] **Ms Chisholm:** I just want to share something with you. The concluding recommendations from the United Nations committee also identified the importance of the UK state party working to tackle negative perceptions of children and young people.

9.50 a.m.

[79] The Minister may not even know that this is on the agenda yet because we have not had a chance to talk with her about it. We are having a major conference in March with the NGOs, the commissioner, the Assembly Government, and, I hope, members of this committee, as well as children and young people, to talk about what the main priorities will be for us in Wales to work together on over the next five years, in order to implement the convention and children's rights effectively. I believe that the issue of negative media images will be high on the agenda.

[80] The other thing that we are doing is talking with the rest of the UK nations about whether there is stuff that can best be done at a UK level. We believe that a lot of stuff can best be done at a UK level, including working with the media, as well as with the Welsh

media. Therefore, I am sorry that we have not given you more information on that yet, but we are working on that at an official level.

[81] **Helen Mary Jones:** I must say that I am not sanguine about our being able to get the UK Government on board with that, but let us hope that you will be successful. Do you have a brief question on the play agenda, Eleanor? We need to move on after that.

[82] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yes. I am struck by how we all feel positively about doing this. My kids are in their 20s now. However, I am concerned, beyond what we have just been saying, about making our society much more child and youth-friendly. I visited a local authority recently to look at its town improvements. The first question I asked was: ‘Where are the facilities for youngsters?’—just as Angela said. If you go abroad, there are places in towns and cities where young people can pick up some kind of play equipment and play there and then.

[83] Apart from training for planners, how are you involving more young people—as you are in school councils, which is brilliant—in planning, and how are you training planners to be more savvy about youngsters? What role do the local service boards have in this? They are supposed to be a delivery arm, beyond local authorities, including everyone. There are some wonderful people out there; there is a fabulous female chief superintendent in Flintshire and Wrexham called Ruth Purdie, and she is taking a very integrated approach to youth delivery.

[84] **Jane Hutt:** I have already mentioned the national standards of participation, which guide how you can engage children and young people. We also have local participation strategy guidance. That is developing as a result of the legislative duty on school councils; they are having a huge impact in influencing school development, as are the youth fora, across Wales. One important example of how the Assembly Government is trying to mainstream young people’s participation is that we are now saying that every department has to have a divisional link officer for children and young people’s partnerships. That will include transport, housing, roads, agriculture, and so on—every division of the Assembly Government and the civil service has to have someone who is looking at how they can involve children and young people in policy-making. We have to show that we mean business, so that we can say, ‘If we can do it, so can you’.

[85] We are involving children and young people in deciding senior Assembly appointments; local authorities can do that, and some schools are beginning to do it. The penny drops when they see how responsible children can be and how effective their voices and participation can be. Whether it is planning town centre regeneration, at school level, or about play policy, it can be done. Therefore, it is a huge cultural change. As Suzanne said, this discussion that we are going to have with young people—as well as with local authorities, the health service, and so on because we must not leave out any of our partners—about the priorities in getting this message over will be very important.

[86] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you for that, Minister. We will now move on to the parenting action plan. I thank Suzanne Chisholm for her participation—it has been very useful. I believe that Elizabeth is staying with us for the next item.

9.54 a.m.

Ymchwiliad i’r Cynllun Gweithredu Rhianta Inquiry into the Parenting Action Plan

[87] **Helen Mary Jones:** I welcome David Middleton to the table for this item. We are now running 10 minutes over time and the Minister has to leave us at 10.30 a.m.. Therefore, I

ask Members to focus on questions not preambles. I will cut across preambles, because otherwise we will not get through the questions that we want to put to the Minister about implementing the parenting action plan.

[88] We have put a lot of time and effort into gathering the evidence on which these questions are based, so I think that it would be frustrating for us all if we did not manage to get through them all. I am not singling anyone out; in fact, you are all guilty today, and that probably includes me. Welcome, David. Minister, the questions that we have formulated are based on your paper, for which we are grateful, and I thank you and your officials for providing that, and also on the written and oral evidence that we have received.

[89] Evidence that we have been given has described the action plan as having fairly modest ambitions. In a way, that contrasts with the assertion in your paper that the plan has acted as a catalyst, that support for parents is now embedded across a number of portfolios, and that parenting is being mainstreamed across a range of policies and programmes. Do you think that the Government could have been more ambitious about what the plan set out to do and about the resourcing? Are there any lessons to be learned moving forward with the next phase of this work?

[90] **The Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (Jane Hutt):** In my previous ministerial role, I was responsible for launching this, back in 2005. It was the result of a lot of consultation on the way forward and on whether it should be an action plan or a strategy. It was felt that, at that time, we needed to get on with delivering some action and not just have another strategy. As you can imagine, at the time, the fact that it was action and not just strategy was welcomed. There were many deliverables in the action plan. I am grateful for your review, and we now need to look at the way forward and at embedding what we have learned. Since then, there have been new initiatives, such as Flying Start, which has a considerable focus on parenting.

[91] The action plan has made a significant contribution and the next phase has to be about how we implement it. It goes back to delivery. How do we build on the developments in the action plan? We have national overarching policy strands and we have good practice, which we need to disseminate. We need to work nationally and locally with organisations on that, and we need to mainstream parenting involvement in every relevant aspect of Assembly Government policy. It also goes back to our children and young people's partnerships and plans. They will be the key vehicle for delivery. There are areas where we have not got there yet, but it was action, we have learned a lot, and new initiatives are now taking us forward to implementation in new dimensions, which is very important.

[92] **Eleanor Burnham:** The Wales Audit Office found limited information on the outcomes achieved by your plan. Why was so little evaluation of the outcomes and impact built into the action plan at the start? Would you take a different approach in the future?

[93] **Jane Hutt:** I am grateful to have the opportunity to view some of the issues emerging from the Wales Audit Office report. Indeed, we can go through aspects of evaluation and analysis that are ongoing, such as parenting programmes. It is critical that we get those right, as well as programmes such as the Incredible Years and Family Links. We must embed our resources in the robust delivery of programmes that have been evaluated and show delivery. We are also evaluating Cymorth, as you know. That analysis and evaluation is critical if we are to move forward with the role and responsibility of local authorities when ring-fencing is gradually removed from Cymorth. Flying Start is being evaluated, and the children and young people's plans provide clear guidance on outcomes. Therefore, we are evaluating according to the actions and we are appropriately evaluating and reviewing the delivery of the actions. We need to take this forward now. I am sure that the committee will have strong views on embedding and mainstreaming this parenting policy not only in my portfolio but in those

across the Assembly Government.

10.00 a.m.

[94] **Angela Burns:** You partially touched on this subject in answer to Eleanor just now, but what came across strongly in the report was that the strategic co-ordination of parenting activity to date across the different Government state departments was not good. You talk about taking it forwards and evaluating it, but we need to look at the strategic co-ordination. Do you agree with that, and what can you do to ensure that that happens so that the right hand knows what the left is doing?

[95] **Jane Hutt:** I chair the Cabinet committee on children and young people, which is a top-level ministerial arena for ensuring that we are joining up Government and being strategic. The parenting action plan has been discussed by that Cabinet committee and has been assessed and monitored in light of ministerial responsibilities. By mainstreaming and embedding and all those things, we need to demonstrate to you, to local authorities and to the wider world what that action plan means for ministerial responsibilities. There have been so many new developments since we published the action plan.

[96] One area on which we should focus is how to target parenting involvement at the most vulnerable families. How do we target the hardest-to-reach communities and address issues of raising adult literacy and numeracy, which are crucial in enhancing a child's wellbeing and educational opportunities? That relates to previous discussions. The role of the family learning programme in Communities First areas is important. I believe that we have embraced this as a Government, but if we need to move forward to clarify a more strategic focus, I would be more than happy to do so. Perhaps David would like to say something from the perspective of an official.

[97] **Mr Middleton:** Critical to us is the role of the children and young people's plans in taking a lead on parenting action locally. Although the final plans are just coming in, the evidence from the draft plans is that the majority—three quarters—of children and young people's partnerships already had a parenting strategy in place or proposed to develop one as a priority. The remaining partnerships all took actions on increasing parenting support as a priority. We still need to look at the children and young people's plans in their final versions in detail, but they should provide us with a good set of evidence of the actions that have been planned locally. They should also give officials an opportunity to monitor progress on those actions over time as well as an opportunity to disseminate examples of good practice. We included in our evidence to the committee some of the initial broad-brush examples that we received from five or six of the plans that we first received. There is good evidence that progress is being made and that the various support needs of parents of all children are being taken on board locally in that plan.

[98] **Helen Mary Jones:** Ann, I think that some of what you were going to ask has been covered.

[99] **Ann Jones:** In that case, I will ask both questions together, Chair. Minister, you said that you intended to continue, but will there be adequate resources for any future strategy? People from the Children are Unbeatable! Cymru campaign told us that there were some positive moves in your parenting action plan, but they felt that there was a missed opportunity on supporting positive parenting to achieve a cultural change on non-violent discipline. What is your response to that, Minister, and what can you do to promote non-violent positive parenting to the wider public?

[100] **Jane Hutt:** Important developments have been the direct result of this action plan. We have also liaised closely with Fforwm Magu Plant, which is the parenting forum. It has

acted as a guide for us in the non-governmental organisations in particular, but also for local authorities.

[101] I wish to give one example that links to the Children are Unbeatable! Cymru campaign, although I will go on to the publications later. We have recently launched guidelines on including fathers in early years services. The involvement of fathers and the consideration of the role and issues of fatherhood have developed as a result of the action plan. We fund a support worker in Children in Wales to work on that. In fact, you will see in the children and young people's plans that a lot of local authorities now have all sorts of initiatives, such as Dads Matter, to engage them. Flying Start has been very valuable in promoting the idea of shared responsibility for parenting, which will have an impact for vulnerable children. We have done a lot of work, partly through the Children are Unbeatable! Cymru campaign and partly through the implementation of the play policy, to support the publication of a number of documents, including 'From Breakfast to Bedtime', and 'Over-the-Top Behaviour in the Under Tens'. A lot of the publications are about managing behaviour, and they have gone out to children at different stages of their lives, as I am sure you know, through health visitors and schools. All those aspects of our giving information to parents directly, to help them with positive parenting and behaviour management, demonstrates where we have put resources in and made a difference. I know that we supported the Children are Unbeatable! Cymru campaign during a very good week of activities in Neath Port Talbot. It worked in a Communities First area to look at ways of engaging parents in the whole issue of positive parenting. A lot of this now is coming through other parenting aspects of Flying Start.

[102] **Eleanor Burnham:** Your paper has a section entitled, 'Actions Carried Forward from the Parenting Action Plan'. Why is it that this three-year action plan, which ended in March 2008, still has outstanding action points that have not been delivered or have been delivered only partially? These action points include the bilingual helpline, for which the funding issue has yet to be resolved, action 3 relating to grandparents, and action 10 on the Parentsnet website and so on. Is this a funding issue? How are people supposed to carry on when the time for this action plan has now ended?

[103] **Jane Hutt:** You are right to question me on these issues, because these are actions that we want to deliver and I am continuing to press forward. I will mention the national bilingual helpline, because I am sure that that is of concern to me as well as to you. I am keen to implement that action. You will probably know that we have engaged with the UK Government on this and different departments have been responsible for it. At the moment, Parentline Plus takes calls from Wales, but we want our own national bilingual helpline. In fact, I am discussing this with Beverley Hughes and I hope to meet her shortly. I am also in correspondence to discover whether there is a way to access some funding for this, because I believe that some aspects of it are a consequential responsibility. That is also being taken forward at official level. That, I think, is the key deliverable and action that we should take forward.

[104] On grandparenting, there is still some work to be done. We recommended that a survey be undertaken of the use made by local authorities of care undertaken by families and friends and the support that they offer. There is now an opportunity in the Children and Young Persons Act 2008 that could provide a framework for care undertaken by family and friends. Gwenda Thomas is taking that forward, and I hope that something can emerge from that. In the guidance on intergenerational approaches, we recognise the role played by grandparents to strengthen the family, and that will be issued next year. This is an example of the cross-governmental work, as you can see. We have also funded a toolkit produced by the Family Rights Group for a Welsh-language translation of the Family Rights book and toolkit. These are issues that I have already reported on in my evidence, but some of it is work in progress.

10.10 a.m.

[105] **Helen Mary Jones:** I wish to ask specifically about the grandparenting work. A working group has been set up, but what is its status? Is it continuing with its work?

[106] **Mr Middleton:** The group has finished now, but the work has been taken on by our colleagues who deal with policy on older people. As the Minister just reported, the role of grandparents and the issues around that are being dealt with as part of their consultations and in the guidance that they are developing on intergenerational approaches to family support.

[107] **Helen Mary Jones:** On the Parentsnet website, which you decided to discontinue, I hope that the Minister will take this next question in the spirit in which it is meant. I have some concerns about moving forward using the Assembly Government website, because it is very big and complex, and it contains an awful lot of information that is essential to businesses, to voluntary organisations and, indeed, to Assembly Members who have staff to help us through. However, I understand these things not at all, and whenever I have to use it at home, my daughter has to do it for me—I will be honest about that. I am told by people who know about these things that it is not a simple, user-friendly website. What we want, presumably, is for people to find the parenting information quickly and easily, which was presumably what lay behind the thinking for having a separate website in the first place. How confident are you that we can use the Assembly Government website to move that provision of information forward, or is there an alternative?

[108] **Jane Hutt:** We have the new website starting by the end of this month—I share your frustration on the points about technological access. The part that relates to parents is being rewritten. David, you want to come in on this point.

[109] **Mr Middleton:** We have been discussing this issue with our colleagues, and the new technical capabilities on the relaunched website will resolve some of the problems that we had in the past with the search engine, which, admittedly, was inadequate. The new site will provide a top-of-the-range search engine, and it is hoped that that will resolve some of the problems with access to information, which everybody struggled with in its previous format.

[110] In addition, the new website will host DCELLS pages that provide specific information for parents. They are currently being drafted for inclusion on the new site, and on that basis, we will develop further links to expand the information that is available. There will be a targeted page on the new website for parents.

[111] **Helen Mary Jones:** The jury will probably stay out on that. If I were a parent who was having trouble with my child's behaviour, the Government's website would not be the first place that I would go to look for advice. Please keep us posted on the progress made with that.

[112] **Jane Hutt:** I do not know when you will conclude your review of the parenting action plan, but it would be helpful to bring the pages to you, even if that is not via technology, so that you can see the content.

[113] **Helen Mary Jones:** We would be very grateful to see them, Minister.

[114] **Angela Burns:** Minister, you have already touched on the issue of resources, but the committee received an awful lot of evidence about the lack of resources to implement the plan. This contrasts with the situation in England, where some £25 million was put behind the three-year parenting action plan. Given the likelihood that we are ahead of England in the treatment, involvement and inclusion of our children, we are trying to understand why no

resources were put with the parenting action plan. I will just add that we are aware that some £400,000 has been spent on ancillaries around the plan, but there was no specific fund to support the three-year parenting action plan, according to the Wales Audit Office.

[115] **Jane Hutt:** It was an action plan and many of the deliverables were via programmes that we were funding. We need to take note of the fact that a grant of £27 million is being distributed to our children and young people's partnerships for Flying Start; of this, £1.7 million is for the parenting programme of Flying Start. That is just one example, but the Cymorth grant has also played a huge part, because it is one of the six key themes for promoting family relationships. Over £200 million of Cymorth funding has gone to local authorities, £17 million of which was spent in 2007-08 on family support across Wales. We have talked about research and parenting grants, and by way of a grant of more than £266,000, we have supported a number of projects, such as Incredible Years Wales and the evaluation by Bangor, Cardiff and Warwick universities of the effectiveness of the parenting programmes, about which there was a question earlier. There is also the work of Professor Judy Hutchings and the Incredible Years Wales programme for the Welsh Assembly Government. Money has been given to the Children are Unbeatable! network, which is not something that the UK Government has funded—it has been positively hostile to it. We have funded it in relation to its work, and also its booklets. Much of the work that we have funded for children is for children and young people partnerships and parenting.

[116] As you know, we have just done a children's budgeting exercise, where we looked at what we are spending on children across the Assembly Government. No-one else has done that, and it is something that the UN convention on the rights of the child committee would like stakeholders to do. We almost need a parenting budget line for what we are spending, and it may be helpful for the committee—I am landing my officials with another job—if we could pull together the strands of funding in the parenting action plan and the programmes that have emanated from it over the past three years, to provide you with a profile.

[117] **Helen Mary Jones:** That would be invaluable, Minister. I was about to write to you in broad terms on children's budgeting issues, because that is one of the next things that we will look at. We were going to ask when we might be able to access that information, but a specific line within that on resources around parenting would be very helpful. Angela, I think that you had a supplementary question on this issue.

[118] **Angela Burns:** I want to make sure that I understand this clearly. I do not think that anyone disputes that a huge amount of money is going into all of these programmes, which I accept, and I also accept that some of the deliverables from the parenting action plan would have been delivered via other mechanisms. Therefore, are you saying, Minister, that, when the three-year parenting action plan was put into place, no parts of it would have required funding that could not have been funded from existing programmes? For example, the national bilingual helpline did not happen because there was a dispute over funding between Wales and England, and there were not enough resources to fund the training to extend the Incredible Years programmes, to commission work by the Social Care Institute for Excellence and so on. Are you saying that the money was always there for all of those things, but through other programmes, or should there have been money tied into the parenting action plan specifically to deliver a few of these items that would not have been covered by other programmes?

[119] **Jane Hutt:** The parenting bilingual national helpline is a specific example. At the time of launching the action plan, we were tied into the UK Government delivery of Parentline Plus. I have already given my commitment that we will look to find a way forward to develop it in Wales. I believe that everything else was programmed in.

[120] **Ann Jones:** On the gaps in service provision, your paper says that the action plan,

[121] 'has led to a significant increase in support and services available to all parents in Wales, from early years' provision through to the teenage years'.

10.20 a.m.

[122] However, the committee has consistently heard evidence that there are significant gaps in service provision, in particular for black and ethnic minority communities, teenage parents, parents of teenage children, parents of disabled children, parents who are disabled themselves, fathers and grandparents. That is a whole range of groups. We have also received evidence claiming that the action plan has had little impact on meeting the support needs of parents of disabled children and that it has had little significant positive impact on parents with learning difficulties. How satisfied are you that the support needs of parents with disabled children are catered for, and have you done any mapping or needs analysis to identify the gaps in service provision? If so, have you identified what services are available and where they are, so that we can, at least, tell people who perceive that there is a gap that it is not that the service is not there, but rather that it is that they do not know how to access a particular service?

[123] **Jane Hutt:** Your point about supporting the parents of disabled children is a key development, which I have been addressing over the past year with our Every Disabled Child Matters task group. As a result of that close and interactive working with that representative group and our discussions about priorities with it, we have levered in more money. For example, early in the process, this time last year, I secured funding for early support materials for disabled children, which are vital for parents as well as professionals. This goes back to earlier questions about the early identification of needs, and supporting parents is critical to that.

[124] We have also put in an additional £2.75 million this year in the draft budget, which is now going through the Assembly, which will focus specifically on disabled children. That investment supports parents, particularly through the short-break scheme, which is vital, not just in offering parenting support, but in providing good-quality short breaks for disabled children and young people. It may provide respite for parents, but its purpose is to provide good-quality short breaks for disabled children and young people. There are many other aspects to the draft budget. One thing that is important in supporting parents financially is the fact that Brian Gibbons, the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, agreed to a specific benefit take-up campaign for the families of disabled children and young people. In addition, the funding that we put into the Mencap campaign on changing places has a particularly positive impact for parents. As well as providing appropriate changing places for disabled children and young people, it will change the planning policy, so that new developments in public or private buildings will have to take on board the need for disabled changing places for children and young people.

[125] I notice from the evidence that has been given to you that black and ethnic minority communities are an area that we should now look at and take forward for parenting. A lot of the work that the Committee on Equality of Opportunity, which you chair, Ann, has done in relation to the needs of disabled children and young people and a lot of the progress that we are making on that relates to supporting the whole family, and the carer or parent. That is crucial for transitions. We all know, as Assembly Members, that the parents' responsibility for a disabled child and young person lasts throughout their lives, it is parenting for life. A recognition of that very much influences our discussions with Disabled Children Matter, and I would want to take that forward. Your evidence will help us in seeing where the gaps are in how we take this forward. As David said, whatever we learn from you, we then have to ensure that it is translated into our children and young people's plans. We can say what we like here and we have to find appropriate resources. However, ultimately, the delivery will be

at a local level for the parents and children.

[126] In relation to young parents and teenage parents, it is an area where health and education work closely together. If we have time I want to mention that we now have a revised curriculum on personal and social education, which has a very clear focus on young people starting to learn about parenting. It would be very valuable if you could perhaps look at the new PSE framework. I am sure that all of us know that we do not teach our children to be parents. It is very much a family responsibility but there is an opportunity within the school and the curriculum to address some of these issues much more practically. However, there is policy on supporting young parents and I will make sure that I send it to the Chair in correspondence.

[127] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you, Minister. The final question is from me, about good practice. In the course of taking our evidence, we heard about a lot of good practice, but we have also heard that there is a need to have a stronger evidence base about what is really effective over time. There is also evidence that suggests that practice is not consistent. Do you see it as part of the Government's role in taking this agenda forward to ensure that the right structures and mechanisms are in place to ensure that that evidence-based good practice can be shared?

[128] **Jane Hutt:** It is definitely our responsibility. I have already listed the funding that we have given out to evaluate the effectiveness of parenting programmes, which has to be our responsibility, and to guide local authorities in their children and young people's planning and to fund national organisations such as Children in Wales, which facilitates the Wales parenting forum, Fforwm Magu Plant, and Fatherhood Wales to ensure that they benefit from our evaluation and guidance. We fund a number of research projects in relation to this, on behalf of those who will deliver. Flying Start being evaluated is critical, as is ensuring that our guidance, which is robust, for children and young people's planning, is backed and underpinned by the evaluation evidence of what is good practice.

[129] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you, Minister. Do Members have any further issues that they would like to raise with the Minister while she is here? We will not have time to go back over the questions that arise from the children's commissioner's report, but if Members are content, I will write to the Minister in her capacity as Minister for children, and to the specific Ministers concerned on some of the broader issues. We wanted to look at access to education for asylum seekers, devolving youth justice—as you know, the commissioner has a very strong view that the sooner that we get that devolved the better—issues relating to looked-after children, which I know that Ann wanted to explore; and some issues related to child and adolescent mental health. Therefore, I will write to you with regard to those questions, Minister, and we will also copy them to the Ministers with the portfolio responsibility.

[130] I take this opportunity to thank the Minister and her officials for giving so much time. We appreciate that and the open and co-operative spirit in which you and your officials work with this committee. I think that we are all very clear about where we want to get to. As the commissioner has said, we want to ensure that the good rhetoric and national approach to children and young people in Wales gets delivered and makes real changes at a local level. I think that we all know of your commitment in that regard, Minister. I thank David Middleton and Elizabeth Williams for being with you.

10.30 a.m.

[131] Diolch yn fawr iawn am eich amser. Thank you very much for your time.

[132] Symudwn ymlaen at y sesiwn nesaf o We now move on to the next session under dan yr eitem agenda hon ar yr ymchwiliad i'r this agenda item on the inquiry into the

cynllun gweithredu rhianta. Yr wyf yn falch o groesawu'r Athro Judy Hutchings i'r pwyllgor. Diolch am ddod o Fangor i fod yma gyda ni heddiw.

parenting action plan. I am pleased to welcome Professor Judy Hutchings to the committee. Thank you for coming from Bangor to be with us today.

[133] Thank you for coming all of this way; it is much appreciated. If it is all right with you, we will go straight into some specific questions, which, hopefully, will enable you to talk us through the programme, its impact, and how you have been evaluating it and so on.

[134] **Professor Hutchings:** Thank you. I have brought some additional information with me, because things are moving so quickly, and, last week, we finished the review of our work for the last year. I will pass that information around, because I might want to refer to it. We also published our annual newsletter yesterday, so there is also a copy of that included.

[135] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is great, thank you very much. You may want to refer us to information in the pack that you are presenting to us in answer to some of our questions.

[136] I will begin the questions. We have obviously received some information, but, for the record, can you explain what exactly the Incredible Years programme is, how it works and who the programme is aimed at?

[137] **Professor Hutchings:** If you would like to take the sheet with the boxes on it out of the folders that I have just passed around, I will use it as a prompt. I have been a clinical child psychologist for 33 years, and my work has always been with high-risk children—children on at-risk registers and children with behavioural problems. I developed and researched my own parenting programme, a randomised control trial, and all the rest of it, but, as a result of being part of the UK parenting researchers' interest group, I met Professor Webster-Stratton from Seattle, and thought that I better have a look at her programme. So, what you have here, on the sheet with the boxes, is a representation of all of the different programmes that are incorporated within the Incredible Years system.

[138] Professor Webster-Stratton started work, like me, 35 years ago, and she initially researched some of the things that are on the bottom tier, such as a programme for parents of clinically referred children. She then gradually extended that to include a programme for parents on adult communication and problem-solving skills, because she found that the addition of that content meant that the gains that people made by attending the parenting programme were more likely to be sustained. However, she found that some children did not benefit in other settings, so that although things improved at home, they may not have in school. So, she then developed the left-hand box on the next tier, which is the child treatment programme on social skills and problem solving. When she added that programme, she found increased problem solving among children, improved peer relations and increased academic engagement. She then had teachers saying, 'Hang on a minute; no-one has ever trained us to manage these children with behavioural problems', and, therefore, she developed a teacher programme. All of her initial work for 15 years was for clinically-referred children and developing a suite of programmes for the parents, the children and the teachers.

[139] I gradually picked up Professor Webster-Stratton's programmes and gradually dropped my own work, because the more I was exposed to her work and to the very collaborative philosophy that her programmes are all based on, the more I realised that that was going to be a better bet for the work that I could do in Wales than what I had done for the previous 15 years. About 15 years ago, the focus of her work shifted into the Headstart programme. She moved from clinical work into early intervention work and, again, took these programmes and expanded and developed them in early intervention work with young children, in the Headstart classrooms of three and four-year-olds, and for teachers. If you look at the Incredible Years website, you will see that you would need a week to go through all the

fantastic research that has been done. Picking up on a point that was raised when Jane Hutt was here, one big issue for the evaluation and research of these programmes is the availability of long-term data. It is okay to show that you can make improvements for parents of three and four-year-olds, but the concern is what happens when those kids are teenagers. Some programmes have long-term evidence and some do not. One of my few frustrations in working in Wales is that, although we have been well-supported because of the evidence that we have managed to generate, we failed to get funding for a longer-term follow-up to our Sure Start study.

[140] So, there are a suite of programmes, and we can deliver them through our child and adolescent mental health teams. Incredible Years was identified by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence as one of just two programmes that are effective in the treatment of children with conduct disorder. So, we can deliver the parenting and child programmes clinically, but since ‘Everybody’s Business’, and our work in primary care supporting tier 1 staff, we have been delivering the parent programme through Sure Start. As you will read in our newsletter, every one of the 106 primary schools in Gwynedd has a teacher trained in our teacher programme and the Dina Dinosaur social skills and problem solving curriculum.

[141] A lot had been happening around north Wales, where we had been doing research, and where I had been training people. That was recognised in the parenting action plan, and which gave us the opportunity to create funding for the whole of Wales to train staff to deliver the programmes. So, the funding has not been given to the children and young people’s partnerships—they have been expected to deliver evidence-based services as part of their existing funding. The funding for the Incredible Years Wales centre went to train local authority staff, and staff working in healthcare and the voluntary sector. So, over the first two years, staff from every one of the 22 children and young people partnerships were trained in the parenting programme.

[142] The funding has continued to allow me to provide supervision and consultation and, this year, we have added training for people to deliver the teacher programme. There is a lot going on, and our recent report shows that every one of the 22 CYP partnerships in Wales is now delivering this programme. That is absolutely fantastic, and has provided very good value for money for the relatively small cost of funding the training. The Welsh Assembly Government has also funded the evaluation of the new toddler programme for parents of one and two-year-olds. We are moving down from the Sure Start work with high-risk three and four-year-olds to Flying Start work with one and two-year-olds.

[143] We have also started to deliver a new programme for parents of babies. It has not yet been evaluated, and has not been a high priority, but there is now a huge amount of interest in that in Wales, so we would hope to get funds to evaluate the baby programme, too.

[144] **Helen Mary Jones:** Eleanor, this leads on to your questions.

[145] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yes. Professor Hutchings, I believe that we had a conversation at the wedding of June Marshall’s daughter in April.

[146] **Professor Hutchings:** We did. Incredible Years people never miss an opportunity to talk about our work—we are so enthusiastic.

[147] **Eleanor Burnham:** Neither do we.

[148] **Professor Hutchings:** We buttonhole anyone that we can.

[149] **Eleanor Burnham:** Exactly. Your evidence is fascinating, but I think that there are

gaps, and that is what I would like to talk about. You mentioned the funding for Incredible Years, but we have already talked to the Minister, as you heard, and one of my questions was about the actions carried forward from the parenting action plan—it was only a three-year action plan, and there are many outstanding action points. How do you and your wonderful work fit into that?

[150] **Professor Hutchings:** On the commitment that the parenting action plan made in relation to Incredible Years, the Assembly Government has done exactly as it said it would. They have funded my time, and we are now using Dr Sue Evans as well, to train, supervise and consult staff across Wales. No-one has funded the delivery of the parent programmes separately—it has had to come through Cymorth or Flying Start. So, the Government has done what it said it would do.

[151] **Eleanor Burnham:** We have had evidence that, although some councils were enthusiastic, many perceive that the programme is too expensive because of the cost of staff, support and materials. What is your view on that?

10.40 a.m.

[152] **Professor Hutchings:** The Welsh Assembly Government has funded materials for every authority. It has funded one set of materials for the infant/toddler programme, the school aged parenting programme, the pre-school/early school programme, the advanced parenting programme and the teacher programme. So, every authority has had a set of materials.

[153] **Eleanor Burnham:** They have had only one.

[154] **Professor Hutchings:** They have only had one, which is not enough I am sure. Last year it funded the translation of the Incredible Years book into Welsh and, this year, we distributed 2,000 copies free across Wales, funded by the Welsh Assembly Government—your funding I should say.

[155] **Eleanor Burnham:** It was our funding, from the taxpayers.

[156] **Professor Hutchings:** Okay. The teacher book has also been translated.

[157] I would like to answer the question about costliness. Working with high-risk families is very challenging and skilled work, and I have been sent some staff to train who would not be able to deliver effectively with high-risk families. I do not think that that is an issue for the Incredible Years programme; I think that it is an issue for any intervention that aims to support the most challenged families. There is an issue that we call 'implementation fidelity', which is about how you deliver a programme effectively. If we look at Carolyn Webster-Stratton's work in Seattle, we see that transport, childcare, and meals have been funded there. Meals are a really amazing thing for bringing families in, and it is wonderful to have an opportunity to give meals—

[158] **Eleanor Burnham:** Socialising.

[159] **Professor Hutchings:** It is wonderful to have an opportunity to give meals to families with children and for them to be exposed to a healthy diet and other things. So, it is about the wraparound costs. My view is that if you are working with high-risk families, day 1 of running the parent group should come one third of the way through the intervention. If you have not spent the previous three months building relationships with those very high-risk families and putting in a lot of time, you will not even get them there. No intervention is effective if the punters do not come. That is one of the problems with programmes for

adolescents: they vote with their feet and say ‘I don’t have a problem’, which makes it much harder. So, my view is that any programme that is going to be really effective with high-risk families will be equally costly, because you have to provide the wraparound service and staff with reasonable levels of skills. Most of the health visitors that I have trained for instance are fabulous, but they are a much more expensive resource than some of the other staff working in support of families.

[160] **Eleanor Burnham:** Having done all this work, it is to be hoped that the next generation will—

[161] **Professor Hutchings:** Reap the benefit.

[162] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yes. Are you happy that your wonderful work is going to be implemented in teacher training, for instance?

[163] **Professor Hutchings:** That is the next challenge that we are moving towards. As part of the parenting action plan, I am training staff in each authority this year to deliver the teacher’s classroom management programme, and I am also working with the education department at Bangor University to look at how we can bring some of those proactive, positive classroom management and discipline strategies into teacher training. So, we are working on it.

[164] **Eleanor Burnham:** My last question is on personal and social education. You might have heard the Minister saying that PSE lessons, which are vital, are being improved and that they will include aspects of parenting. What is your view on that? Do you have any input to that with your wonderful work?

[165] **Professor Hutchings:** With children with—

[166] **Helen Mary Jones:** The personal and social education curriculum is including elements of parenting—

[167] **Eleanor Burnham:** That, again, is going to be helpful for the next generation, hopefully.

[168] **Professor Hutchings:** It is crucial to develop children’s social and emotional literacy. That is what the child dinosaur programmes are about, and that is the focus of the teacher programmes. Certainly what we have seen in Gwynedd—and this has been acknowledged in every Estyn report that has been done in schools since we were there—is that the school-based work to do that is very effective and that, if you do not do that first, you may as well not bother with the add-on literacy and numeracy, because if the kids do not have the social and emotional self-regulatory skills, they cannot benefit in an educational environment anyway.

[169] In the parenting programme, there is an increasing amount of social and emotional literacy content, so you will see that the programme in the middle of the paper before you, the pre-school/early school programme for three to six-year-olds, is an 18-session programme. When Carolyn initially researched it, it was a 12-session programme. Coaching persistence, coaching emotional literacy, coaching social skills and problem solving have been added into that. There is big component of teaching children to be effective problem solvers. Therefore, another reason why these programmes are more expensive is because they are longer. That is based on 30 years of research.

[170] **Eleanor Burnham:** My last question—

[171] **Helen Mary Jones:** This has to be your last question, Eleanor, because you have hogged half the session.

[172] **Eleanor Burnham:** Have you had any input to the foundation phase?

[173] **Professor Hutchings:** I have submitted information about the Incredible Years child curriculum. I believe that that is why teacher classroom management has been funded as a first step, so we are moving. We can only move at the rate of the amount of work that I can do during two days a week.

[174] **Helen Mary Jones:** Before we leave the question of funding and move on to evaluation, I have a question on the cost of materials. You have told us that the Assembly Government has funded one set of materials for each local authority. Are the local authorities then allowed to duplicate those or does each school that needs and wants them, as the programme is rolled out, have to purchase them? Voluntary organisations in my constituency have mentioned this as being a real problem for them in using the Incredible Years curriculum; they do not doubt its effectiveness for staff, but they find affording the materials difficult.

[175] **Professor Hutchings:** Unfortunately, it is a short-term problem versus a long-term problem. For example, in our child and adolescent mental health service, which we started developing 10 years ago, the set of materials that we spent £750 on buying has probably been used in 30 groups. You are allowed to photocopy all the written materials and parent handouts; you are not allowed to copy the DVDs as they are copyrighted. Therefore, you need to provide your services with materials, and I guess that £750 seems like a lot of money to run one parent group. However, it is still small compared with the cost of staffing even one parent group. Therefore, it is a relative issue; the biggest single cost is the staff, but the groups may not have budgets.

[176] You have a summary of the review that we have just done, which I only finished at the weekend. We found that all 22 authorities are now delivering the programme, which is fabulous, although more so in north Wales than in south Wales. One question that all authorities asked in the review was, 'You have provided us with free Welsh books for parents; could you provide us with free English books for parents?', because they are expected to fund that. Therefore, as yet, I have never asked local authorities directly for funding. However, we should perhaps be looking now to fund more materials. March might be a good time for that; that is when I usually get them to give materials to authorities—I always have a plan ready for the beginning of March.

[177] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is if they have some money left.

[178] **Professor Hutchings:** The general feedback was very interesting. The main criticisms were about the difficulties in doing it, in getting materials and being able to allocate staff sufficient time. Predominantly, they were not criticisms of the programme; they were comments such as, 'It is hard to do'. We say that, to deliver this parent programme, you need to give your staff a day and a half a week to run one parent group; they fall down when they first hear that. However, if you are going to contact every parent between groups; if you are going to review what you did in that two hours; if you are going to arrange all the transport and so on; if you are going to look at next week's session and work out how you are going to deliver it; and if you are going to contact the people who do not show up and hopefully give them a kind of catch-up session, it will take you a day and a half a week.

[179] **Helen Mary Jones:** I am going to have to stop you there, Judy. We need to focus a bit. I believe that you have some questions on outcomes, Ann; I think that Judy has touched on some of those, but you might want to unpack that a bit more.

[180] **Ann Jones:** Yes. We have had evidence to say that the outcomes from your programme are clear, in that people are trained and that training materials are purchased, although we have just heard that there are some problems there. However, the Assembly Government has not evaluated the impact of the training at a local level. Do you have any views as to why it has not done that?

[181] **Professor Hutchings:** The wonderful evaluation that we did, which came up with such outstanding results, was in 11 Sure Start centres across north and mid Wales. That was simply because, when Sure Start was being set up, people came to me and said, 'What should we do?', so we trained them in the Incredible Years curriculum and then we had all those authorities doing the same thing. Those are the outcomes that are published in the *British Medical Journal*, for which we are still looking for funding for long-term evaluation.

10.50 a.m.

[182] This year, the Welsh Assembly Government has funded an evaluation of the toddler programme. It gave us £114,000, which is not a huge amount, but I also negotiated funding for one full-time PhD student. For the £114,000, it wanted us to evaluate across Wales. There is quite a good description of that project in the new newsletter, which was published yesterday. We have worked with six authorities in north Wales and we are just about to start working with three in south Wales, doing high-quality home observation, parent-child interaction and developmental assessment of children. So, it is supporting us in starting to do that evaluation. All of our Sure Start study was delivered by the local Sure Start staff. We did not deliver it. Our evidence is that 22 staff in 11 different services can deliver programmes effectively, but every week they had to come for three hours' supervision, show us a videotape of what they had been doing and talk about the problems. So, we can achieve good results with our local staff and we are now evaluating the toddler programme. We hope to have the data on that by next summer.

[183] **Helen Mary Jones:** Ann, would you like to ask a supplementary question?

[184] **Ann Jones:** Yes. This may be like asking 'how long is a piece of string?', but is it possible to give us an idea of how many children have benefited from the Incredible Years programme?

[185] **Professor Hutchings:** I have a summary of the report before me. Last year, following the training, 148 groups were delivered across Wales to an average of 10 parents. So, that would be 1,400.

[186] **Ann Jones:** To 1,400 parents?

[187] **Professor Hutchings:** Yes.

[188] **Helen Mary Jones:** With at least one child each.

[189] **Professor Hutchings:** They would have one target child that they were addressing through the programme who may be of Flying Start or Sure Start age. However, many of them have several more children. We are impressed that, of the 10 parents starting, the authorities were reporting eight parents finishing the programme, which is a high retention rate. I think that is because the Welsh Assembly Government has funded me to travel across Wales delivering supervision and consultation every single term for the past three years to support the leaders.

[190] There are three components to effective parent programmes—not only Incredible

Years. The first is the issue of access—whether you have the resources to get them there, look after their kids and support them. The second is that all of the effective programmes in the world are based on social learning theory. There is a core curriculum about positive human interaction. The third is that the most effective programmes are based on a collaborative process. It is helping parents to work it out for themselves. That is the set of skills that we have to help people to develop. So, our numbers are looking good, although more so in the north. Two and a half years in, to have every authority delivering at least one programme is a pretty good start. I think that the mean was four per authority across Wales, although it was higher in north Wales. However, with regard to all of the other children who are outside Flying Start areas whose families might also benefit, we are not even at first base.

[191] **Helen Mary Jones:** This brings us neatly to your next question, Eleanor.

[192] **Eleanor Burnham:** It is a shame. As you know, I worked with 14 to 16-year-olds who had been excluded. I firmly believe that, were we able to do more of this, we would not need more prisons, for example.

[193] **Professor Hutchings:** Absolutely.

[194] **Eleanor Burnham:** If only we could turn around the thinking to say how much will be saved at the other end rather than the programmes being seen as a cost. It is a huge asset.

[195] We have received a great deal of evidence about the gaps in service provision and the barriers to parents accessing parenting support. You have obviously just said that you are only touching base with Flying Start areas; how will we ensure that we provide for the rest of the people who desperately need some support, whether parents or teachers?

[196] **Professor Hutchings:** Health visitors are an important resource. However, everyday health visitors—not Flying Start specialists—find it really hard to allocate the amount of time that is needed to deliver these programmes.

[197] **Eleanor Burnham:** Can you help with that or is that an issue?

[198] **Professor Hutchings:** We train health visitors all the time, but then it is up to the local services to decide how they allocate priorities and whether the priority is getting more vaccinations—

[199] **Eleanor Burnham:** Where do you think the gaps and the barriers are, and what do you think can be done to address them? Is it a matter of funding, or something else?

[200] **Professor Hutchings:** I guess that funding more health visitors would be pretty important, along with specifying what we want them to do. They must do evidence-based things. It is also important for teachers to get this social and emotional curriculum—and, incidentally, you may all be familiar with SEAL, social and emotional aspects of learning. If you look at the front page of those papers, it says, ‘Thank you to the Incredible Years’, and SEAL includes things directly from the Incredible Years child programme, but not much of it. So, we see this as an additional social and emotional curriculum on top of SEAL, which has not yet been evaluated.

[201] **Eleanor Burnham:** So, are you inputting your Incredible Years into teacher training generally, either in Wales or in the UK?

[202] **Professor Hutchings:** Not generally, no. We have started to work on it in Bangor, but—

[203] **Eleanor Burnham:** Do you think that it is essential?

[204] **Helen Mary Jones:** Eleanor, could you let Judy answer, please?

[205] **Professor Hutchings:** Our current input is for teachers who are on the job. We provide the five-day training and support and so on to teachers who are working in schools. For example, in Gwynedd, all 106 schools now have teachers who are trained in this. Powys and Blaenau Gwent have a development strategy for their existing teachers. However, we are only just beginning to get down to what happens in teacher training. They get half a day on behaviour management in a year.

[206] **Helen Mary Jones:** So, there is a lot more to be done on initial teacher training.

[207] **Professor Hutchings:** A huge amount.

[208] **Eleanor Burnham:** With your foot in the door, you are obviously hoping to make more impact in the gaps.

[209] **Professor Hutchings:** Yes. Carolyn has a structured accreditation process, so, if you do the basic training for a programme and you deliver it, you have to videotape yourself delivering it and send it off to a trainer, like me. Eventually, you become an accredited leader, but you have to demonstrate a lot of complex skills. She then takes some of the accredited leaders and trains them to be mentors or trainers. So, my goal is to start shifting a few people through the system, because I cannot do it. I am 64 years old and I have just agreed to do half a day a week for Birmingham, because it is—

[210] **Eleanor Burnham:** Stay in Wales, Judy. [*Laughter.*]

[211] **Professor Hutchings:** My goal has to be finding a replacement for me or expanding the tier of work that I am doing. At the moment, we could hardly ask the Welsh Assembly Government for more money to do what I am doing, because there are not many people to do it. My goal is getting the service on the ground so that people can be supported.

[212] What is interesting about this is that, of the 206 leaders who have been trained across Wales and who replied to our survey, 66 per cent of them had delivered the programme. So, there was a high take-up of the programme. Of those, they delivered an average of four programmes each, and 80-odd per cent of them already had plans to deliver it again. So, once people start delivering it, they see changes in families that you do not see in your everyday one-to-one work with families.

[213] **Helen Mary Jones:** Ann has a specific question for you.

[214] **Ann Jones:** During the course of the consultation exercise, several respondents mentioned the need to learn lessons from other parts of the UK, and the England-only National Academy for Parenting Practitioners was mentioned as an example. Do you have any information on how Wales compares with England in relation to the support given for parenting, and what are your views about linking to the parenting academy in England? Should Wales—

[215] **Eleanor Burnham:** Should there be a Welsh parenting academy?

[216] **Professor Hutchings:** That is a good question. When the parenting academy was being set up, I wondered how we would fit into it and whether we could have some money for research, but I found that it was an English project. I worked for the Department for Children, Schools and Families for half a day a week up until last March, supporting projects in

England. It is much more piecemeal in England, but there are some very good authorities. We have managed, through Flying Start and through our support, to get something going everywhere. There are some excellent authorities, such as Manchester. I do not know whether you have seen the book on early intervention by the MP for Nottingham North, Graham Allen, but the authority has created what it has called One Nottingham. It is the first early intervention city in England and it has a suite of evidence-based programmes, which is really exciting. So, there are pockets of fantastic work in England, but I do not think that the academy has succeeded yet in having a widespread effect.

[217] **Ann Jones:** So, you would not want to link up with the academy?

11.00 a.m.

[218] **Professor Hutchings:** Around a fortnight ago, Stephen Scott of the academy asked me whether I had any spare time to work for it and I said ‘no’. So, I think that the academy feels that we have demonstrated that in Wales. We had, in north Wales, the only evidence in the whole of Britain of the effectiveness of Sure Start. The £30 million-worth evaluation that London did of the English Sure Start did not show any effectiveness and, worse than that, it showed that the very high-risk families were doing worse if they lived in a Sure Start area than if they did not. Although the more advantaged families were actually doing a little bit better, there was only a very small difference. They had given them the money and had not suggested what they should do with it. They had given the money and they had all done different things, and the evaluation could not spot the effectiveness of Sure Start. It was just by chance that I was in north Wales, had been developing this, and all our Sure Starts starting delivering the same thing, so we had 11 Sure Starts that we could all research. It was really high-class research, which is why it went into the *British Medical Journal* and is being cited all over the world. England is learning from us.

[219] **Ann Jones:** So, you think that we should create a separate parenting academy in Wales.

[220] **Professor Hutchings:** I do not know. I think that either would be good. It is important that Wales gets a focus, and I wonder whether Bangor would be the place to establish something, because of all the work that we have done. We could be twinned and that would be fine.

[221] **Helen Mary Jones:** That was useful. This is a big question from me, Judy, and I saved it for last. Where do we go from here? Some very good work has come out of the parenting action plan and has been led forward by that, but how would you like to see the parenting work now driven forward by the Assembly Government? Do you think that we need a revised and updated action plan? Do we need a more ambitious strategy? Do we just need to carry on doing more of what we are doing, but more of it with better funding?

[222] **Professor Hutchings:** It is there for you in your pack. There is a beautiful pyramid. In the back of the summary of the new report, I have noted what I am asking the Welsh Assembly Government to fund for me, next year. I could go through that quickly. This is my dream list—if Wales gets here in 25 years’ time, it would be fabulous. On the Incredible Years programme, I have looked at all the different levels of intervention, including universal, targeted, those referred to child and adolescent mental health services and high risk, and I have noted where all those programmes might fit in. Which one shall I do first? I will do this one, on the back page of the little blue document. Am I running out of time?

[223] **Helen Mary Jones:** No, it is just that some young people whom I know are staring at me through the window.

[224] **Professor Hutchings:** That is nice. Okay, the first thing that I need to do is make sure that I am funded to continue developing the skills of existing group leaders, to establish accredited leaders and mentors. It is not until every local authority has a mentor who can train in-house and provide in-house supervision that the programmes will really become embedded. That is my first goal. There has been so much interest in the baby programme and the toddler programme that I am asking for funds to continue to train, using those programmes. On the teacher and child programmes, we started delivering training for people to deliver the teacher programme, and I think that we should now add in the child programme. That is my suggested plan for the things that I could do over the coming year.

[225] If you go back to look at my pyramid, you will see all the Incredible Years programmes and all the different levels. This is totally ambitious, but, at the very base of the pyramid, I have said what we should be doing universally. There is a four-session Incredible Years school readiness programme that I think teachers could deliver to parents when their children start school. It is about play as a learning activity and encouraging parents to pick up books and talk about stories—I would say play with books with children. I also think that the basic parent programme should be compulsory training for nursery staff and it could be universal. It also gets National Open College Network credits, so they could get a qualification with it.

[226] If you move up one line on the pyramid, you see the universal programmes for our children who are in school, namely that their teachers should have completed teacher classroom management and should be delivering the Dina dinosaur classroom curriculum, including social skills and problem solving. If you then move up another line, you will see that we are starting to look at our indicated populations. I do not think that it is realistic to think that we could deliver the infant and toddler programmes to every parent, but wherever we know that there is a high risk, that is an 'indicated' child. As you move up the pyramid to the indicated three to six-year-olds, you see that those parents will need access to the early school years basic parenting programme, and their children would then be going into schools and classes that have the teacher and the child programmes.

[227] Then you come up one level of the pyramid to 'Indicated 6-8 years' and the school age parenting programme. We are trying a new experiment in Gwynedd, in that, where children are getting this universal social and emotional curriculum, they are beginning to pull out kids for extra coaching.

[228] Under 'Indicated 8-12 years', you can see that we are adding in the older school age programme, with extra pull-out social coaching in small groups for children, and specialist consultation for teachers in behaviour planning. So, they will have had teacher classroom management training, but they still need specialist support to develop the behaviour plans for higher risk kids.

[229] Finally, at the top of the pyramid is the CAMHS intervention, and that will include all the therapeutic programmes. Down one side of the pyramid, I have noted who might deliver these programmes and provisions, and down the other I have put the ages. Looked-after children and children with developmental disabilities should be accessing all those services at all levels, including the specialist service noted at the top.

[230] The pyramid took me a while to do, but I had to show how all these programmes fit together, because this is the only programme in the world that has been developed for parents, children and teachers using such high evidence levels, and it has also been researched preventively and clinically. So, I decided that this was the best thing that I could do for Wales. This pyramid shows how to do it.

[231] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you. I think that Ann and Eleanor have some questions to

ask based on that. The presentation was really useful, and it would be helpful if everyone who gave us evidence were that specific.

[232] We have been discussing this matter, but there are people in the public gallery who do not have copies of the material that we are talking about. We will therefore try to put some of it up on the website so that people can look at it.

[233] **Professor Hutchings:** Absolutely. I had a question about whether we could put the BMJ papers on the website, and we would be completely happy about that. Alternatively, you could just publish a link to the Incredible Years website, because the papers are on there anyway.

[234] **Helen Mary Jones:** That might be the simplest way of doing it.

[235] **Ann Jones:** Yesterday, the Committee on Equality of Opportunity launched its report on migrant workers, and the effect of migrant workers on their communities and on the working atmosphere. You say that people have to pay for resources in English, because you provide them in Welsh, but I am concerned about speakers of Polish and other European languages. Where we identify a child in need, how can they access these resources in their home language or at least a language that they are comfortable speaking?

[236] **Professor Hutchings:** The material has now been translated into quite a lot of different languages, most certainly Spanish and Portuguese, for example, but not Polish as yet—although I trained in Poland, so there is great interest there as well. Carolyn Webster-Stratton has worked with 27 different cultural groupings and languages, and her way forward has been to run the training first for the interpreters. I sat in on a group in Seattle at which a guy was translating for two women between Tigrinya and another Eritrean language. Also, there was a Spanish translator and a Vietnamese translator, and all these interpreters were just sitting behind the parents and talking quietly to them about what was being said. We cannot have the programme in every language, but we have to address people's needs. The issue is one of identifying and training leaders from different cultural backgrounds so that they learn our key concepts, such as giving attention to the type of behaviour that you want to see more of, and being role models for our children's behaviour. We need them to work out key, snappy ways of giving parents those messages so that they will remember them, and that comes down to training. In her research with African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Spanish-Americans, and Caucasians, Carolyn analysed more than 1,000 families and found that they were all equally effective for their children, despite their cultural differences.

[237] **Helen Mary Jones:** Ann mentioned the issue of Welsh-language and English-language materials, so, to make sure that I understand you correctly, was it the Welsh Assembly Government that funded the translation into Welsh—

[238] **Professor Hutchings:** Of the parent book.

[239] **Helen Mary Jones:** Right, but the local authorities are supposed to provide the parent book in English, so there is no cost to the parents, is there?

[240] **Professor Hutchings:** There is no cost to the parents.

[241] **Helen Mary Jones:** The 'they' who were whinging about getting the book in Welsh for free while being expected to pay for the English version are the local authorities and not the parents, are they?

[242] **Professor Hutchings:** Absolutely.

[243] **Helen Mary Jones:** I feel reassured by that. Frankly, I think that they should have been paying for the Welsh one as well.

[244] **Professor Hutchings:** We think that doctors should be able to prescribe them, as they are a lot cheaper than pills. I just have to tell you that every single effective parent programme shows a significant improvement in maternal depression, and 50 per cent of conduct problem kids have clinically depressed mothers. These very effective parenting programmes—not all programmes, but the effective ones—are a treatment for parental mental health problems. They teach problem-solving, observation and realistic goal-setting. It applies to the kids and also to the rest of their lives.

11.10 a.m.

[245] **Eleanor Burnham:** I would have loved to have had this when I was trying to be a decent parent, 25 years ago. I think that it is terrific. However, how does all of this fit into the foundation phase, particularly as we know that it is so patchy, because of the funding issues? Have had you any input into the foundation phase that the Welsh Assembly Government is trying to get off the ground, or are you hoping to do so?

[246] **Professor Hutchings:** My only input is in the training, but some local authorities are taking the teacher programme, the classroom Dino programme and the parent programme into nurseries. It depends on local services to do it, but those that are doing it are doing a great job; we have described them in the newsletter. So, we are publicising it all of the time and researching, but it is a big job.

[247] **Eleanor Burnham:** Are you allowing everyone in Wales to see how wonderful you are, and do you have a marketing plan for it?

[248] **Professor Hutchings:** We do not have a marketing plan, but if you would like to fund one for us, that would be great. The newsletter costs about £4,000 to produce every year, and we send it to every Assembly Member and everyone else we can think of. The Welsh Assembly Government gave me £1,000 towards it this year, which was great. We try to disseminate the research, because it is an important part of it—research hidden in a box is no use to anyone. Our annual conference is in Cardiff this year, so we hope that we can attract more of you. Jane Hutt is opening it, and Graham Allen MP from Nottingham is coming to describe the One Nottingham plan as well, which is very exciting. So, we disseminate our work, and we have endless enthusiasm for it.

[249] **Helen Mary Jones:** There is certainly no lack of that, Judy; thank you. Do Members wish to raise any other issues with Judy? I was going to ask what you would like us to consider as recommendations, but you have given us all of that, so there is no need to ask you about it—it is all down on paper. Thank you for coming, Judy. I know that you have provided us with a lot of written evidence in any case, but there is no substitute for hearing things face to face and being able to have a dialogue. So, we are very grateful to you for coming all of this way, and I hope that you feel that it is a useful part of disseminating what you are going to do. For the sake of clarity, the committee does not have any money—Ministers have the money, and it is our job, among other things, to advise them on how to spend it.

[250] Before I draw the committee meeting to an end, Tom, is there any specific issue that I need to raise with Members?

[251] **Mr Jackson:** Only that the next meeting is on 11 December, when the committee will take further evidence on the parenting action plan.

[252] **Helen Mary Jones:** We will be writing to the Minister about the questions that we

were not able to ask her. Thank you again to Judy, and I will see everyone on 11 December.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 11.13 a.m.
The meeting ended at 11.13 a.m.