



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

**Pwyllgor y Mesur Arfaethedig ynghylch Dysgu a  
Sgiliau (Cymru)  
The Proposed Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure  
Committee**

**Cyfnod 1  
Stage 1**

**Tuesday, 4 Tachwedd 2008  
Dydd Mawrth, 4 November 2008**

**Cynnwys**  
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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**

Christine Chapman	Llafur Labour
Jeff Cuthbert	Llafur (Cadeirydd) Labour (Chair)
Andrew R.T. Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Janet Ryder	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Kirsty Williams	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats

**Eraill yn bresennol**  
**Others in attendance**

Syr / Sir Adrian Webb

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

Claire Griffiths	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Gwyn Griffiths	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Anne Thomas	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau Members' Research Service
Siân Wilkins	Clerc Clerk

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.02 a.m.*  
*The meeting began at 9.02 a.m.*

**Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon**  
**Introduction, Apologies, and Substitutions**

[1] **Jeff Cuthbert:** We have already been informed that Sir Adrian needs to leave at around 10 a.m. for another engagement. I urge Members, when we get to that stage, to keep questions as brief as possible.

[2] **Sir Adrian Webb:** There is some flexibility. I have told them that they may expect me to be a little late.

[3] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you; we will see how we go. The very latest that we will be here is 10.30 a.m. in any event.

[4] Today, we have Sir Adrian Webb before us; he is the sole presenter today. I welcome everyone: Members, staff, and, indeed, members of the public in the gallery. I remind everyone that we operate bilingually. On the headsets provided, translation from Welsh to English is available on channel 1 and channel 0 provides an enhancement of the sound.

[5] If the fire alarm sounds, the ushers will escort us from the room to a place of safety.

We are not aware of any drills planned for today. I ask everyone to turn off mobile phones, pagers, and any other electronic devices, as these interfere with the broadcast and translation systems. I remind everyone not to touch the microphones, because they will operate automatically. No apologies for absence, notifications of substitutions or declarations of interest have been received.

9.03 a.m.

**Mesur Arfaethedig Ynghylch Dysgu a Sgiliau (Cymru) 2008—Cyfnod 1, Sesiwn  
Dystiolaeth 7**  
**Proposed Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2008—Stage 1, Evidence Session  
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[6] **Jeff Cuthbert:** This evidence session will form part of the committee's consideration of the general principles—Stage 1 of the legislative process. I formally welcome Sir Adrian Webb to the committee. We have explained that there is no need for introductory remarks; if you are content, we will move straight into questions.

[7] **Sir Adrian Webb:** Certainly.

[8] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I will ask the first question, which gets to the nub of it. Do you consider that the proposed Measure will achieve the objective of creating learner entitlement to a diverse and personalised curriculum?

[9] **Sir Adrian Webb:** May I say 'yes' and 'no'?

[10] **Jeff Cuthbert:** You may.

[11] **Sir Adrian Webb:** The Measure is essential; it is crucial that we underpin the 14 to 19 pathway policy with a legal structure that gives it more strength and, hopefully, some real clarity—that is crucial. I have several possible thoughts about how the Measure might be strengthened, which we can perhaps come to later.

[12] However, you will know as well as I that legislation can only achieve certain things—it certainly will not transform our education system on its own—and there is a huge need for successful implementation. There is a huge need for courage and to recognise that we are where we are, and it is not a good place to be; our education system in Wales for 14 to 19-year-olds is not performing anything like as well as it should and we would want it to—let us be clear about that. We need to be urgent, and at times, radical, if we are going to improve on that. Therefore, implementation is crucial, and it is important to have a legislative structure.

[13] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you. We will now move to questions from Members. The first questions are from Andrew R.T. Davies.

[14] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Thank you for coming along today, Sir Adrian, it is much appreciated. I wish to touch on the importance of further education colleges, because there are two aspects here in that secondary education and further education are delivering the pathways. What impact do you believe this Measure will have on FE colleges, in particular in its ability to deliver the local area curriculum? Do you believe that the collaborative arrangements between secondary education and FE colleges, as prescribed, are sufficient, or do you have a better suggestion, given that those collaborative arrangements will be critical in making this a success?

[15] **Sir Adrian Webb:** You will be aware that I chaired the review. You will also be

aware that, in the course of that review, we were concerned that there was not anything like sufficient collaboration—I would not say that it was not happening, but it was not happening in a dramatic way, or in anything like a sufficient way, and we were concerned about that. You cannot legislate for collaboration, but you can legislate for a structure that makes it more likely and more possible. We did not go down that kind of route—we did not talk about legislation. If you remember, what we talked about was the importance of having consortia of schools and FE colleges. I still think that that is a critical way forward. However, to be totally honest, what we did was to throw a rather large and rather Stalinist-looking brick into a pond, in the hope that some ripples would reach the edge. I did not believe—and I am not at all surprised—that the full rigour of a set of national consortia, as we argued it, would be implemented through this Measure, or after this Measure.

[16] However, it is critical that we recognise that playing around with collaboration will not be sufficient—there has to be some serious movement away from the tendency to operate within institutional boundaries. That is true of FE colleges and schools; do not misunderstand me—I am not being partisan about that in any sense. It is not just about FE colleges and schools—it is also about local employers, and we also need to think about what can be added by the voluntary sector. I strongly believe that we need to develop our youth services, and that they should be adding to the 14 to 19 mix, because, to go back to the Chair’s words, what we need is diversity. We need a diversity of courses, which must cover the traditional, academic courses, but also the strongly vocational courses; I happily use the word ‘vocational’, and we may want to come back to that. We also need a diversity that covers different learning styles; it has to cover everything, from the traditionally didactic, to the experiential, to the kind of learning experience that you can get in real-life situations, work placements, and so on.

[17] Therefore, it is about diversity, but not just of courses, but diversity of styles, and of contexts. One of the biggest problems that we have to tackle is that, for quite a lot of disengaged kids—and they are getting disengaged from the ages of 12, 13, or 14, although it often happens in primary school as well—the school context itself is a part of the problem, because the school environment is not conducive to them. Therefore, it is important that we have diversity of contexts, as well as of content and of learning styles. All those three things are critical.

9.10 a.m.

[18] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** You mentioned the school environment not being conducive to engaging pupils. Do you think that by having a mix of further education and secondary education, there will be a more mature atmosphere and that students will feel more engaged?

[19] **Sir Adrian Webb:** For some kids, there is no doubt that part of the alienation is an alienation from the school environment. You can change the school environment, and some quite dramatic things are being done in schools up and down the country to change the nature of the school environment entirely and the pattern of teaching and how it is organised and so on. However, the fact remains that, for some kids, the school itself has become a symbol of what they find difficult in education. For some, it has become a symbol of failure. You do not break through that, but we absolutely have to do so if we are to reduce the NEET problem—those not in education, employment or training—and the number of kids leaving school without qualifications or, indeed, basic skills. If we are to break through that, we must recognise that the context and style of learning is as important as the content.

[20] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** May I go back to the issue of collaboration—

[21] **Sir Adrian Webb:** Sorry, may I just add something? We may come on to this in a moment in terms of what can be added to the Measure, but it is critical that we have that multi-stranded approach to diversity. Further education colleges are a part of that ‘critical’,

but they are not the only part.

[22] Our view of collaboration, as I say, is that it is important to have quite robust consortia because you have to try to create an environment in which the individual interests of the institution, its governing body and the headteacher are offset by the interests of the student within a community of providers of learning, including FE colleges and work-based learning and so on.

[23] I will just briefly elaborate on that, if I may. By all accounts, I was a successful vice chancellor; by all accounts, according to my colleagues, I was a competitive and ruthless vice chancellor and it is right to say that the current rewards system—and this is true of headteachers and college principals—and the measures of success are entirely institutional. So, for you to be successful, you have to pursue the interests of the institution. If you have a broader vision, and I would hope that I had a broader vision, you would say that that is not good enough and that, at some point, we have to think about the interests of the learner, of the wider community and of the community in which the institutions are embedded. So, at times, you do not ruthlessly pursue the interests of the institutions alone, but all of the emphasis—if you are to be a successful leader or a successful governing body—is on pursuing the interests of the institution. The reason why we argue for consortia is because you can begin, at least partially, to reduce that drive for the institution, potentially to the deficit of that broader, more diverse learning experience. Sorry to go on about that, but it is critical that we recognise that good leaders are likely to be quite selfish about their institutions.

[24] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Those were good points; thank you.

[25] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** On co-operation, because there will be an element of training involved in this and you have secondary school teachers and further education professionals, how do you see the collaborative model delivering good training opportunities for the staff who will be charged with delivering the model in the Measure?

[26] **Sir Adrian Webb:** That is a good and important point. In the review, we argued that there is a disparity at the moment between the approach to and expectation of and funding of in-service training for different groups of staff in different institutions. That does not seem appropriate or sensible. May I be a little bit radical for a moment?

[27] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** By all means. [*Laughter.*]

[28] **Sir Adrian Webb:** I am not pretending that this can be done tomorrow or across the whole of Wales, even in the medium term, but we have a cadre of teachers—let us call them teachers for the moment, meaning people who are able to help others learn—who are a precious resource. They are a limited and scarce resource; many of them are extremely good, although not all of them are. We have to try to aspire to a situation in which we use that cadre, that workforce, in a way that is flexible across institutions, and not bound to institutions. In other words, a teacher from school X should be perfectly able to, and encouraged to, teach for part of the time in college Y on a particular programme, and vice versa. Indeed, we should have people coming in from the workplace and teachers going out to the workplace. That kind of flexibility means that you should begin to think of the staff resource as a whole, and train it as a whole and train it together. Conjoint training will begin to reduce the suspicions and the barriers that can exist when people operate in separate institutions.

[29] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** It would be interesting to have the unions' view on teachers moving from institution to institution.

[30] **Sir Adrian Webb:** We have to be clear with the trade unions that we are talking about the greater good of our young people and that if we do not get that right, not only will

we have a huge continuing problem of social justice where we will be, not intentionally, but unintentionally, discarding a large number of people to the point where they cannot realistically hope to succeed in the highly competitive modern world, but we will see it rebound on Wales Ltd and on our ability to take our economy forward. So, it is not just a social justice issue, but an issue of wealth and future prosperity as well. I am sorry, but I think that one has to be a little bit urgent and radical about this. We are not at the top of the international league tables and we ought to be, both in terms of serving the least advantaged learners and stretching the most able—that is a controversial issue, but just as important—because we are not doing that as effectively in Wales as we should.

[31] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I have two Members who want to come in on this point; I will take their questions and then we must move on. Christine Chapman, first, on this point.

[32] **Christine Chapman:** I just wanted to ask a little more, Sir Adrian, about the comments that you made about FE staff. Not only the trade unions, but other witnesses who have come to committee recently, have talked about practical barriers—such as child protection issues and different cultures. Do you think that those barriers are insurmountable, or are they exaggerated?

[33] **Sir Adrian Webb:** I do not think that those barriers are insurmountable. There is no doubt that they are powerful, but there is also no doubt that if you really do not have the courage or the desire to work truly effectively across institutions, you will use those barriers as excuses. That is one reason why I said, right at the beginning, that I think that a legislative framework is critical, because one of the things that we have to do is offset people's very understandable resistance—do not misunderstand; it is not malevolent—to upsetting the normal practices and rhythms of their institution, their profession and the way in which they work and live. To be genuinely more collaborative is disruptive to the way in which people have come to work and to the kinds of expectations that they have about their work. So, yes, of course, those barriers are real, but they can also be exaggerated and we have to offset them. I do not think that they are, in any sense, insurmountable. The one thing that I would add—apart from things such as in-service training and terms and conditions, which do need to be looked at—that is absolutely fundamental and critical, and which is another thing that I would be inclined to want on the face of the Measure, is that nothing will move in terms of collaboration unless you have common timetables. People may throw their hands up and say, 'Common timetables are impossible; they will disrupt the whole of my school life', but, sorry, that is not true. There are good working examples in the UK of common timetabling across as many as 18 to 20 institutions. All it needs is a little bit of imagination, some jolly good software and a different approach to how you structure the learning day, and, indeed, the learning year, because clearly you do have problems with term times and all of that. It is not in any sense impossible, but it does require determination.

9.20 a.m.

[34] **Jeff Cuthbert:** You are quite right; we received evidence in a previous meeting from David Eynon of the Caerphilly partnership that the timetabling issue had been addressed successfully.

[35] **Janet Ryder:** Should anything be added to the Measure, particularly on that point, to make it work? You have mentioned putting in common timetables on the face of the Measure to make sure that it is included, but you also said that it will take a long time to develop those common timetables, because you are talking about terms and conditions, school years, term times and working hours. Those are aspects that need time not just to be developed in theory but in practice, because you have to work them through with the workforce, and you may need to re-model your workforce in some way. Is the timetable that the Minister has set out, namely getting roll-out by 2009, achievable?

[36] **Sir Adrian Webb:** I do not think that any of that takes an inordinate amount of time if you are committed, if you really want to do this and you really think that the goal is extremely important, and that not achieving your goal would be disastrous for Wales. So, I think that it is about commitment. To go back to the consortium model in the report, my argument is that we need to have rigorous piloting of radical models. The body of the kirk is going to give ideas back to the Minister and the department about how they might go forward, and I am absolutely clear in my mind—and I always was—that one size does not fit all, because you cannot do the same thing in every part of Wales. In some places, the tertiary solution would be right, and so on. However, something approaching a rigorous consortium model needs to be piloted in some areas where there is a willingness to do so, such as Caerphilly which has already gone a long way in that direction. If you proceed quickly where there is willingness, you set up models that can be rolled out across Wales. Getting a transformational approach across the whole of Wales by 2010 is ambitious, but I think that we will get a transformational approach in quite a large number of areas. However, it is not just about the Minister and the Department for Culture, Education, Lifelong Learning and Sport—it is about the willingness of people on the ground and their recognition that it is a tremendously important objective to achieve for Wales.

[37] **Jeff Cuthbert:** This is an important point, and I am anxious to let Members explore it, so I will be tolerant. Chris indicated that she wanted to speak first, and then I will come to Janet.

[38] **Christine Chapman:** This is the nub of the problem, and a number of witnesses have expressed concerns about the timescale. You said that the timescale is ambitious, but that it could be done if the commitment was there. I am not saying that the witnesses are not committed, because, clearly, they are, but how do you suddenly get commitment so that the timescale could be adhered to?

[39] **Sir Adrian Webb:** This is twofold. You go with the grain, but you make a transformational change in those areas where there is a sense of ambition, urgency and willingness. You do that, because you have role models. Coming back to the Measure, my inclination would be to build clear, legally underpinned duties and accountabilities into the Measure beyond what is there at the moment. I would be inclined to build in a requirement for headteachers, principals and governing bodies to move towards a common timetable approach in those communities of providers bound by a local curriculum within a reasonable time period. Why should there not be a duty to move towards common timetabling? If you do not have that, you will not get much collaboration, and the barriers will be huge, obvious and practical ones.

[40] This may be touching on something entirely different, but I would want to build something into the Measure about travel, but you may want to come back to that.

[41] I do not wish to sound like a village Hitler or anything like that, but in the report we suggested that it would be interesting or valuable to place a clear statutory duty on the heads of institutions, FE colleges and schools in terms of achieving basic skills, and to make them accountable for that. The reason we suggested that is simple. If you place a legal duty on heads to drive basic skills and make them accountable for that, you will not transform things overnight, but you will transform minds and behaviours, and my view is that the power of legislation is that it begins to transform minds and behaviours. Let us take the example of legislation in relation to discrimination. I was part of that in the 1960s—I do not want to comment upon your ages, but I was part of it. Back in the 1960s, people said, ‘You can’t legislate for better race relations or better relationships between the sexes’, but you can, because, over time, you change mindsets and, therefore, behaviour.



[42] So, I would build in accountability for headteachers and governing bodies. There is the clause about considering collaboration in order to maximise rather than achieving the minimum, but I would build in an accountability to collaborate to deliver the minimum and I would also strengthen that a little. Having clear, legally presented duties and accountabilities on headteachers and governing bodies can go a long way, and I would toughen up the Measure on that basis.

[43] **Janet Ryder:** You have looked at this area for a long time; you headed up the review and, therefore, you are aware of all the arguments. However, an awful lot of people, not only practitioners within this sector, but parents and pupils moving into this sector, have heard nothing about this at all. They expect school life to go on as it is and that there might be the odd change—the changes that have come along in this area have been around the delivery of 14-19 pathways and have been to do with individual achievement and so on. Many other initiatives in this area have preceded this. I want to take you back to the timescale. Do you think that legislation has to come first and then you will win hearts and minds, or do you win hearts and minds and then bring in legislation?

[44] **Sir Adrian Webb:** You do both. The legislation is an important part, as I was just saying, of beginning to change mindsets, so, as a first step, legislation is important. I do not think that you will achieve an ambitious timetable through legislation alone, but it is an important starting point. As I have just suggested, if you achieve the ambitious timetable of transformation, it will be by focusing on and supporting those who are willing to change, move and do different things in imaginative ways. Supporting them will create models that will overcome the worries, concerns and doubts of children, parents, teachers and governors about the nature of the changes that we have to go through. Let us be absolutely clear, even compared with where the world economy was 10 years ago, we are failing a lot of kids now. Considering where our economy is likely to be 10 and 20 years hence, we will be failing even more if we have significant numbers of kids leaving school and adults without basic skills.

[45] I am speaking personally, to be clear, and not as chair of the Wales Employment and Skills Board. As the chair of the Wales Employment and Skills Board I would say, and employers would argue strongly, absolutely rightly, that employability is as important as basic skills, but that is not what we are addressing at the moment. We are talking about the understanding that those who are new entrants to the economy have of what it is like to be in the world of work. I will give you an example from a survey by one of the employers that came to the review. It said that it had undertaken a survey of applicants for jobs, which were quite basic jobs, in its organisation. One of the questions was, 'How often do you think it is reasonable to be late for work in a week?'. The median response was, 'Three times a week'. That is what they mean about employability—they are not just talking about basic skills; they are talking about attitudes and understanding the nature of the world of work. So, the scale of the problem is big now, but it could be huge given the way in which the world economy is likely to go. Therefore, I think that the scale of change must be commensurate with that. There is a lot of change happening in education around the UK, so we will not be alone in making substantial change.

9.30 a.m.

[46] **Jeff Cuthbert:** It has now gone 9.30 a.m. and we are still on the second question. However, we have probably covered some of the later questions with your answers to the supplementary questions, but that is for Members to decide. We have not covered the issue of learner travel, which you alluded to, so I will ask Andrew to move on to that question.

[47] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** You touched on travel, but you did not elaborate on it. Travel between institutions will be a critical component of this, and we have received evidence on it, particularly on the rural issue. We are aware that the proposed learner travel Measure does not

cover the aspect of travel that is related to this Measure. What is your view on that and on the provisions that may need to be extended with regard to travel in the middle of the school day? There will also be a funding issue with the extra travel. Where do you see the funding coming from to meet that? The Minister told us that he is more than happy with the funding pot that is available for the Measure per se. On the rural issue, do you have any bright ideas on how to deal with problems around sparsity and the distance between various institutions and secondary schools?

[48] **Sir Adrian Webb:** One of the consortia that we looked at and were very enthusiastic about was that in Wolverhampton. The members of that consortium said that if you have the right programmes, the travel problem falls away, because families and children will find ways of getting to their destinations. That is an urban response. They were saying that families would bear the cost, and that is fine if you have an urban infrastructure and relatively low-cost transport. However, it is not a rural response, so we went to look at Cumbria, where there is much more rurality and where many more of the problems that we have in Wales, including mountains, exist. I think that the answer is—and this is why I say that one size cannot fit all—that, in a rural context, you must be in a position to be able to deliver a large slice of the minimum curriculum very locally, across one or two schools. What is important is that you then have a collaborative framework—or consortium or whatever—so that the less common subjects are available, particularly for those who are gifted in those areas, across a wider geographical area. I do not envisage your moving whole classrooms around a county to get the kind of curriculum that we are talking about; my view would be that you must have a strong minimum curriculum with limited movement and that you would have additional movement for special subjects, opportunities and skills, including vocational skills. That is why I ask—and I will go back to where I was—why we are talking about kids moving. It is the staff who should be moving, in substantial measures. One of the other duties and accountabilities that I would build in for heads of institutions and governors would be around the facilitation of the movement of staff across institutional boundaries.

[49] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** That goes back to your earlier point.

[50] **Sir Adrian Webb:** I would make that a duty on heads and governing bodies, because it is much more cost-effective and it is less disruptive to move staff. That is not the whole answer, as you must have a combination of staff moving and students moving to an extent, but you can move staff rather more easily than students.

[51] The other thing that I would add—and I know all the doubts and concerns about this—is that you can do quite a bit with the IT-based delivery of materials, not to create subjects that are not available in the school, but to support subjects.

[52] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So, it is about using IT as a support mechanism rather than as a substitute for a teacher in front of the students?

[53] **Sir Adrian Webb:** The honest answer is that we do not know, because it is still relatively early in the development of IT-based learning for this age group. However, we know about adults, and many of them can learn effectively entirely on an IT basis. That is what many employers are now doing with in-service training. When I was running the hospital group, a lot of the in-service training was done using IT, and the adults learned successfully. They need some kind of pastoral support, but not necessarily academic support. I do not think that that is true of younger age groups, although it varies by ability and background. Let us not forget that the IT competence of young people is growing much faster than that of adults, and they are much more used to surfing the internet, and to using technological forms of communication. They live their lives on mobile phones. I accept that there are issues of disadvantage and poverty, but we should not neglect the IT solution as part of the package, if only a part. In rural areas, one still has to accept that there will be more

limitation on choice. However, we should not exclude the possibility of movement across significant distances for some, regarding certain specialisms.

[54] **Jeff Cuthbert:** We will move on now, and I will ask Kirsty Williams to ask the next group of questions. They are on information and communications technology, but I see no harm in bringing them in—

[55] **Sir Adrian Webb:** May I just make a conclusion on transport issues?

[56] **Jeff Cuthbert:** We have not finished on transport yet, so there will be time. Kirsty Williams has the next question.

[57] **Kirsty Williams:** With regards to rural areas, you said that a minimum of courses would be delivered locally. What would you regard as the minimum? You said that some courses were special; which ones are they? Would pupils and staff then be required to—

[58] **Sir Adrian Webb:** You will not draw me into designing a curriculum. Crucially, there is a minimum level of provision even in the most rural environments, and that includes a range of courses—some traditional academic, some vocational courses, and so on. A difficulty that one has to recognise is that some vocational programmes are significantly more capital-intensive. I always used to hear comments about hairdressing that suggested that vocational programmes in beauty and hairdressing were some kind of soft option, or a bit of a doddle. In fact, if they are done properly, they are capital-intensive options, so you would have to recognise that not every school in rural areas can offer that kind of vocational programme. It just would not work, because such courses are so capital-intensive and you could not afford it. A critical point about vocational courses is that, if they are to have any value, they must be pretty close to industry standard. One of my great fears if we do not have collaboration, is that we will see competition between schools and FE colleges—and that is already happening—to provide vocational programmes that are often capital-intensive. They will then be forced to do it on the cheap, because they do not have the resources, and they will be forced to move away from the industry standard, which will not help to make people employable.

[59] To go back to your question, there has to be sufficient diversity across the academic and the vocational at a local level. However, even courses like beauty and hairdressing may be sufficiently capital-intensive to be unavailable in local schools in a rural context. Kids might have to travel to access such courses, or you could get imaginative and bring the kit to schools in rural areas, equipping vehicles to do so. We are doing that in a number of other areas and a number of other contexts. One could imagine a rural-school equivalent of a mobile library, but, in this case, a mobile vocational study lab.

[60] **Kirsty Williams:** The reality is that many 16-year-olds in my constituency already have to travel out of county, or board, to access courses.

[61] **Sir Adrian Webb:** Yes. I said in the review that, at that age level, for vocational education for 16 to 19-year-olds at least, we should take into account the issue that we face at higher education level, namely the higher cost of living away from home. However, we have never really taken that into account. For some pupils, it would be a frustration of their skills if they were denied an opportunity to study vocational programmes away from home. That is an issue of social justice, too. Why should we recognise that as a problem in higher education but not in vocational programmes for 16 to 19-year-olds?

9.40 a.m.

[62] **Janet Ryder:** I would like to clarify—*[Inaudible.]*—a duty on headteachers and

governing bodies to enable their staff to travel? That might cause a financial burden. Do you envisage it happening where budgets are still channelled through individual schools, or would it happen only once money is channelled through consortia?

[63] **Sir Adrian Webb:** At one point in the review, we went really radical and said that, in the long term, you should not fund schools or FE colleges separately for the 14-19 programmes that we are talking about but fund a consortium, because you can then use the resources cost-effectively. However, I did not imagine for one minute that that would be attractive for the whole of Wales. If you have a well functioning consortium—and we do not have to invent that, as Wolverhampton has a perfectly good system for payment across the institutions within the consortium—you will begin to create movements of money and resource across institutional boundaries. At that point, you can ask, ‘Okay, we are already moving resources, so should the kids move or the teachers?’, and so I do not think that it becomes such a big issue.

[64] There were some indications in our evidence that a really good collaborative consortium model could become more efficient, although that is untried and untested. If it becomes more efficient, you create extra resource that can be used for some other purpose, whether that is for travel or for improving the capitalisation of programmes or buildings. That is a matter for Government Ministers to decide, not me. I will not say where the money should come from. However, there is no doubt that our current system is far from efficient, and, if we could increase its efficiency—and collaboration is one mechanism for doing that, though not the only one—we would free up resource for other things.

[65] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you. We have covered more than one area there, but we have not referred explicitly to Welsh-medium provision. That is the subject of Andrew’s final question.

[66] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I want to touch briefly on Welsh-medium education, because witnesses have raised various aspects of it. You touched on the timetable in response to Janet. In response to a question that I put to its representatives, the Welsh Language Board said that securing adequate Welsh-medium provision in time for the commencement of this Measure is unattainable. What is your view on the ability of institutions to provide courses through the medium of Welsh? The aspiration of all concerned is that it is available to all, and, if we are truly to have a bilingual Wales, it must be available to all in Wales.

[67] **Sir Adrian Webb:** At a school level, Welsh-medium or bilingual provision is currently at a rather more satisfactory plateau than it used to be in Wales, but it then falls down a cliff, because it is catastrophically limited in FE colleges. You have to look at three issues, one of which is the demand for it, given that the evidence that we received shows that the demand also falls off rather catastrophically at some levels and in some forms. That is partly because there was a lack of awareness of the range of employment opportunities for people who are bilingual, which was a very interesting part of our work on the review. There is a threefold issue here. We need much sharper advice on, and knowledge about, the career opportunities for people who are bilingual, because we need to stimulate the demand beyond—

[68] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** But is that drop-off happening because the opportunity is not there in the first place, so students are not advised to take up the option?

[69] **Sir Adrian Webb:** Who knows? The answer to that is let us not worry about the causality if we can hit the problem from several different directions at once. The different directions are to provide better information about career opportunities if you are bilingual and a better supply of teaching staff, because teaching staff who can teach through the medium of Welsh or bilingually are a precious resource. So, we come back to my position that we need

to think about our workforce in a pooled way rather than in an institutionally specific way, or, indeed, a geographically specific way. We suggest in the report that Welsh-medium or bilingual teaching are areas for which we should look seriously at strong, well resourced, systematic IT-based development, because we could spread materials much more effectively than we do currently in Welsh-medium education.

[70] I concur with the Welsh Language Board. It is not an issue that will be resolved in every geographical locality, at every level, or in every kind of programme quickly, because the drop-off at FE is very sharp indeed. It is possible that the drop-off of staff who feel competent to teach vocational subjects where they have previously been teaching academic subjects will also be sharp, but I am not sure about that. All I am saying is that I think that it will take time. However, if we are to move sensibly, we have to think of our teaching resource as a valued resource that need not be tied up entirely in institutions and geographical areas.

[71] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you very much for that. We will now move on to the next group of questions, from Kirsty Williams.

[72] **Kirsty Williams:** Chair, we have already heard Sir Adrian's views on IT, so I will move on and ask about other elements of learner support services. What is your view on the provision of learner support services, for all learners—namely learning coaches—and those for more vulnerable students in particular?

[73] **Sir Adrian Webb:** I will start with a *cri de cœur*. I am sure that, under the latest politically correct language in public places, I should not use that phrase, but, really from the heart, the first thing that I would want to get right is genuinely impartial advice about course options and career options. I was very struck by the impact on what may possibly be a small number, but we do not know. In our evidence, we saw relatively small numbers of students, but we were really quite distressed by some of the stories that were brought to us about the pressures put on them to follow particular kinds of courses or to stay in particular kinds of institutions. In some cases, it was illegal. We are talking about alleged behaviour by teachers and headteachers that is illegal. There is one case in the report of a young man who wanted to go to an FE college, who was locked up in a room for over an hour and told that he would not be let out until he changed his mind and stayed in the sixth form.

[74] So, my starting point would be that we do not have a universal genuinely impartial and well informed system of advising on careers and choices. That is one of the accountabilities that I would build in for the heads of institutions—both headteachers and FE principals. I think that they should be accountable for ensuring that there is genuinely well informed and impartial advice about course options and career options. We went as far as to say that the children's commissioner should have the opportunity to get involved in that area, because we ought not to be putting kids under that kind of pressure to keep bums on seats because of the funding system. You may want to come back to funding.

[75] In Wales, you have experts on coaching. Have you seen Professor Danny Saunders, who has done all the work on this? He is better able than I to comment on this area. However, I argue that we should be exploring far more ambitiously the use of mentors, particularly for the most disadvantaged. When I was running the university, we had a lot of university students going out to schools.

9.50 a.m.

[76] However, when you are talking about some of the more disadvantaged kids, it is not university students who you want to go out. You want young workers going into schools, and you want role models of the kind that people may be following in terms of their career. We

should do much more about getting young mentors into schools to work with and support those kids who are most likely to disengage, as well as those kids with learning difficulties. There is no doubt that the peer group, if well-supported as mentors, can have a huge beneficial impact on motivating people, and demonstrating to them that their uphill struggle is not impossible, and, much more importantly, that there are rewards at the end that are worth it. So, systematic mentoring is one thing that we should add to the learning coach model, particularly for the more disadvantaged kids—those with learning disabilities and those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

[77] **Christine Chapman:** I wish to come back to your point about the boy who was locked in a cupboard—

[78] **Sir Adrian Webb:** It was a room, not a cupboard; I do not want to start an urban myth about a boy who was locked in a cupboard. [*Laughter.*]

[79] **Christine Chapman:** I am sorry. That is obviously an extreme example, which is unacceptable, but would you agree that a lot of this is more subtle, but is very powerful? Young people are influenced by parents, teachers, peers and so on, so it is wider, but much more subtle, and it is difficult then to pin down. We have talked about legislation and about this Measure, and the possible need to strengthen it, but do you feel that there is more that we can do within that to increase the influence?

[80] **Sir Adrian Webb:** As I say, a clear duty to ensure informed and impartial advice about programmes and careers would be helpful. You want to try to change mindsets and behaviours, and you want to try to offset some of the genuine pressure that you are under as the head of an institution when you are funded by bums on seats—I am sorry, I should have used a technical term there; if you are funded per capita. [*Laughter.*] If you are funded on a per capita basis, every student who you do not hold is a loss of resource. One of the interesting things about the consortia that we looked at in England was that, because they were giving a much more diverse curriculum, and fewer people were disengaging at a young age, they were getting more bums on seats. However, it was not more kids staying on to do A-levels; it was more kids staying on throughout the system, because they were doing things that they saw as relevant to their lives.

[81] However, even placing a duty is itself a mechanism for change. Beyond that, we argued, the responsibility for careers and course advice should be at the level of consortium institutions, not at the level of individual institutions, because you then have a careers advisory system, and a course choice advisory system, that looks across all the options openly. However, I do not believe that we can neglect the funding pressures that heads of institutions face under a per capita funding system. It is bizarre that, in Wales, we sit here and say, ‘Our model is a citizen-oriented, collaborative one; it is not a market one’, and yet we fundamentally drive competition between schools, colleges and universities in a most overt manner. I do not believe that it is easy to get away from it completely, but I do not believe that it is impossible to soften it. We should offset it by duties for impartial advice, and so on.

[82] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** You have mentioned learning coaches and mentoring, and trying to identify young people to become mentors. What is your understanding of the potential network of learning coaches that we have to fill the crucial role of guiding young people onto the right courses, and guiding them through this Measure and these pathways? If the coaches are not there, the whole thing falls apart, does it not?

[83] **Sir Adrian Webb:** This is not an area of expertise that I would claim. As I say, Danny Saunders, and such people, are much more aware of the position on the ground. As I understand it, it is looking encouraging, but the task is a big one. What I am trying to suggest is that the weight and scale of the task cannot rest entirely on the shoulders of coaches; I think

that we need other things to back that up. I alluded to it earlier, that I think that we need a much better youth service and that we need to engage mentors and use the voluntary sector and employers more. All of these are potential sources of support for learners, above and beyond the coaching model.

[84] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** When we had the employers in—admittedly we have only seen the Confederation of British Industry to date, but I am hopeful that one or two others might come in—they were completely oblivious to the learning coach method that we have been looking at and unaware of the ability of employers to provide a resource for the learning coaches. I found that quite dispiriting, to be honest.

[85] **Sir Adrian Webb:** I am not wholly surprised by that. You are probably right that relatively small numbers of employers would be really alert to what is happening with the coaches, but there is a more fundamental issue, in that we simply need to totally reorganise the way in which schools and FE colleges relate to employers. The whole work-experience thing is focused so sharply on relatively short periods of time that employers really do not cope very well and get turned off. We actually just need an entirely different approach to—  
[*Interruption.*]

[86] Is that my mobile phone that is ringing? It is. I do apologise.

[87] **Jeff Cuthbert:** It is all right. Please leave £10 on the table. [*Laughter.*]

[88] **Sir Adrian Webb:** It stops after two rings. It has stopped now.

[89] We need to look, root and branch, at how we organise the whole set of relationships between employers, schools and FE colleges; we need to spread it throughout the year and organise it differently. I think that that would release quite a lot more employer engagement. If you get the employer engagement, they will learn about learning coaches anyway, because they will be involved in the schools and colleges. I do not think that you actually need to go out to try to teach them about learning coaches; you should get them in the schools and they will learn by osmosis.

[90] I do apologise for the phone, Chair.

[91] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you. The next few questions were to be about collaborative arrangements, but I think that we have probably addressed that, unless there is something else that you might want to bring in.

[92] **Kirsty Williams:** I think that we have addressed it, but I would like to ask Sir Adrian's view on the split in terms of designing the local curricula, with local authorities responsible for a certain age group and then the Minister moving in to deal with provision for 16 to 19-year-olds. Do you have any views on that?

[93] **Sir Adrian Webb:** Ideally, you would have a single approach to education for 14 to 19-year-olds. We argued for that in a way that would not be very comfortable for local authorities, in some senses. Our view was that you really need a common approach to planning and procuring, if you like, all of the education for 14 to 19-year-olds. It is, obviously, unfortunate that it is split in that way, but I do not think that it is a colossal problem; I think that that can be overcome relatively well.

[94] On a slightly different point, what I think is crucial, and the split that we do need, is the split in the consortium model that we tried to sell. I do not want to sell everything about the consortium model, but there are a few things about it that were really very important. One of them was the notion that you separate out the role of the institutions in practice, with one

home institution for a student and then another institution that provides a course. That is what makes the Wolverhampton consortium so fantastically successful, comparatively: the home institution has a duty and a responsibility for finding programmes that are appropriate to the learner and are of a high quality. The home institution gets the kudos of the pupil's success, so the home institution's performance will rise because of good teaching in other institutions. That was such a powerful model.

10.00 a.m.

[95] The other thing that I felt very strongly was that if you had a clear notion of a home institution on the one hand and a provider institution on the other—not every programme is going to be provided by the school or the college in which the student is registered—you have a chance of beginning to look in a slightly more flexible way at the problem of small sixth forms, because that is a real difficulty and a huge problem. However, if you define a sixth form's role as that of a home institution, not just that of a provider, you give it, in effect, a solid job and a solid income purely as a pastoral home base. You would also expect them to teach some of the programmes. That is a potentially valuable way of looking at the problems of small sixth forms. I am not saying that it will resolve the problem of every small sixth form in Wales, but it could go a long way to helping quite a number of them.

[96] Incidentally, on staff, we must remember that, with the demographic downturn and the inefficiencies that we have in the system, it would be in the interest of staff and their headteachers to think of the staff as a pooled resource. You will be able to afford a better range of staff if they are not all being paid 100 per cent from your institution's budget, but with that cost being shared by other providers.

[97] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Did you refer to 'a pooled resource'?

[98] **Sir Adrian Webb:** Yes.

[99] **Janet Ryder:** Would that be a pooled resource under the consortia?

[100] **Sir Adrian Webb:** Let us not go down the way in which we were looking at it, which is a bit Stalinist, but if you have effective collaboration in which money is moving from one institution to another, following the student, the staff resource will also move, because the cash is moving. You can envisage the staff moving, teaching in a different institution, and being paid by that institution. So, you could sustain the level of staffing in a small sixth form that you would not be able to sustain if you were trying to make all the provision yourself.

[101] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I will let you come back in, Janet, but it is past 10 a.m.. We are in your hands, Sir Adrian; the latest that we can carry on to is 10.30 a.m..

[102] **Sir Adrian Webb:** I suspect that the people whom I am going to meet will be wondering where I am, but I have already told them that I will be late, so do not worry, Chair. However, I do not know how to turn off my new BlackBerry—[*Laughter.*]

[103] **Jeff Cuthbert:** It might be interfering with the recording system, so I am sure that there is someone who will know how to do that.

[104] **Sir Adrian Webb:** I see that the keyboard is now locked; I did not do that.

[105] **Jeff Cuthbert:** That is a level 3 key skill in problem solving.

[106] **Sir Adrian Webb:** Perhaps you could take it outside and put it in a bucket of water or something. [*Laughter.*]



[107] **Janet Ryder:** Did you make any assessment of the impact on lower schools if you pooled the staff for those aged 14 plus or even 16 plus?

[108] **Sir Adrian Webb:** We did not. It is an interesting issue, because the argument has been—research is ambivalent about this—that if you do not have sixth forms in schools, it is much more difficult to attract good staff into those schools. However, the research is ambiguous on that, with some suggesting that that is probably right and some suggesting that it does not matter; we cannot adjudicate on that. However, supposing that it matters that you have a sixth form, because it attracts a different quality or because it imbues schools with a different ambition and ethos, we looked at finding a way of maintaining at least a small sixth form in schools that would not otherwise be able to maintain it. Looked at imaginatively, the consortium approach might be a saviour.

[109] **Janet Ryder:** However, presumably, if you are going to fund those staff to teach at another institution, they will not receive their salary for that period from their home institution. Therefore, that sum of money would not be included in the school's block grant and that would affect the rest of the school.

[110] **Sir Adrian Webb:** It would—

[111] **Janet Ryder:** Or would you double fund it?

[112] **Sir Adrian Webb:** I cannot design a system for you right now, but there are two different ways to do this. One is that it does not go into the school's block grant; the other is that it does, but that the school makes the payment over to the institution that provides the programme. In some cases, the staff employed by the school could also travel to provide education for the kids from other institutions in a consortium, so that the costs of teachers in small sixth forms could begin to be shared. We did not model this in detail, we are just saying that this looks as if it could work, so the department should pilot it. That was our argument, namely to pilot it, because if it worked, it might be valuable in helping to retain some sixth form presence in schools that would otherwise lose it.

[113] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you. We are in your hands, but we will move on to the next group of questions, which is from Christine. We are talking about funding structures and implementation, which we have addressed in part at least, but it is up to you, Christine.

[114] **Christine Chapman:** I would like to ask a few other questions. Sir Adrian, you talked about vocational and academic education, and that we do not just refer to those in the Measure. Do you think that these terms are getting in the way of what we are trying to achieve with 14-19 provision?

[115] **Sir Adrian Webb:** I am happy to use those terms in the sense that I think that it is absolutely critical that we get programmes of a practical and career-oriented kind that we do not presently have—let me call them vocational. My view about the whole issue of this kind of terminology is that, frankly, words, although they seem terribly important, are not. Some people would say, 'Do not use the word "vocational"; use some other word'. If you use some other word and the vocational programmes are not good, that word will be just as devalued as some people see 'vocational' as being devalued at present. My starting point is that we have to have genuinely excellent, high-quality, imaginative and engaging programmes of all kinds. If you have that, and if the success rate for kids on such programmes, including in getting into jobs, is high, there will not be a stigma attached to what I presently call vocational programmes.

[116] As one of you said earlier, when I was talking about independent and impartial

advice, one of the problems is that the parents themselves have the perception that only an academic route will lead their children to a successful career. There is a whole weight of assumption and expectation that we have to try to battle our way through. As a former vice chancellor, I can say that, in some ways, the expansion of higher education has made that more difficult because, for some people, it is even more of a failure not to go to university than it was previously because nowadays, almost half of young people can do so. We have to battle hard, but the way that you do that is by providing genuinely high-quality, imaginative and attractive programming, and that will, in due course, resolve the issue. However, I also argue that, in Wales, we have a unique vehicle called the Welsh baccalaureate and we should really use that with great confidence and imagination to span what we presently call academic and vocational education, but what I would also call life skills, citizen skills and so forth. If we did that, I think that we could significantly overcome some of the problems of language and nomenclature. As I argued in the report, the Welsh baccalaureate is not just an exam system but a strongly developed philosophy of educational and personal development. I think that that would be very valuable. We have a vehicle that we should use and be proud of.

[117] **Christine Chapman:** You said today, Sir Adrian, that we need to be radical and you have offered a radical way forward. As far as schools are concerned, we have a system here. I know that it has been said that if we were to start with schools now, we would not start from here; we would probably start with something completely different. I think that it was Susan Lewis from Estyn who said that at one point. We have to bear in mind that we are not starting with a blank piece of paper, we are starting with systems and, at the end of the day, we are dealing with people who have to deliver this. Therefore there are all sorts of dynamics about delivery, progression and security. Can you offer any thoughts on how we get to a more radical system, bearing in mind all of those sorts of provisos?

[118] **Sir Adrian Webb:** There are several different components. When I took over the Polytechnic of Wales, as it had just ceased to be, and the University of Glamorgan as it became, we had a heck of a lot of change to achieve, because we were trying to sell courses that students did not want. I jokingly used to say that we admitted more students than had applied. It was not quite true, but we were very heavily dependent on clearing.

10.10 a.m.

[119] How do you achieve radical change within a timescale that you can cope with and yet which is good enough? There are several different components to it. You must have a big picture to which people can sign up. Not everyone will sign up to it, but you should say, 'Here we are—this is where we have to be and it is critical to the future of our nation and in terms of social justice for kids and adults who are presently disadvantaged'. You must have a big moral picture and say that this is a moral issue. It is a moral crusade. We must do a lot better, and doing a lot better requires some radical changes, including experimentation. I am not pretending that anyone has all of the answers as to how to re-engage people—and there are quite large numbers of kids who are disengaged.

[120] Therefore, you must start with a big moral picture, which must be driven hard, but you then must acknowledge that the capacity for change varies, by locality, by sets of institutions and by the models that we adopt. You need a diversity of models and to pilot some of them hard, you need to work with areas that are most willing to change and recognise that those areas that are least willing to change will catch up more slowly. I just do not think that you can drive it right across the nation swiftly. However, I think that the big moral picture says, 'No, I'm sorry' to all of those objections. They are, absolutely, understood, but we must do this; we must transform the performance of our education system.

[121] **Christine Chapman:** Bearing that in mind, the timetable is tight—it is September 2009 for year 10 pupils, with a full roll-out across Wales within four years. Do you have a

view on whether that timetable is achievable?

[122] **Sir Adrian Webb:** In terms of what the Measure says, I think that it should be achievable for a minimum local curriculum. When it comes to going beyond something that is minimal, I think that it will be more uneven and it will take different forms and timescales. I will comment on one other detail in the Measure, if I may, which is section 8, and the grounds for heads to make decisions to reduce or limit the entitlement. I would not admit subsection 8(2)(b) or 8(2)(d). Subsection 8(2)(b) gives the grounds that:

[123] ‘as a result of other elections made by the pupil under section 116C(1), it is not reasonably practicable for him or her to follow the course of study’.

[124] For me, that is a get-out clause. The second get-out clause is 8(2)(d), which is that the entitlement could be limited on the grounds of disproportionate expenditure. My view is that you should drive collaboration to make a wide choice available economically. Entitlement should drive that collaboration and that range of choice and the cost-effectiveness of that range of choice. I do not think that you should limit entitlement because people have not started collaborating. So, I would take those out, or I would say that they only apply in exceptional circumstances—I would modify them in that way—so that the pressure is on. Pressure has to be applied. In practice, there will, of course, be a huge variation in the level of achievement in a couple of years, but you can live with that. However, if you have some stars, and places that are really doing things differently, then you can spread that over the rest.

[125] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I do not want to be negative—

[126] **Sir Adrian Webb:** Oh, I am not being negative.

[127] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** No, I mean me; I do not want to be negative. I hear exactly what you are saying, which is very inspirational, but I want to go back to a point made earlier about the fact that responsibility for 14 to 16-year-olds will lie with local education authorities and responsibility for 16 to 19-year-olds will lie with the Minister. You talk of the big picture, but if you want to deliver the big picture and get the vested interests in and say that this is the way in which we must go, you already have that dilemma of a lack of co-operation by having responsibility in two separate places. You do not have someone to drive that big-picture agenda and drive the vested interests out of the system so that the big picture reaches the screen.

[128] **Sir Adrian Webb:** That is true and that was something that we were trying to address, however ineptly or bureaucratically, by saying that you need a strong DCELLS regional structure and local consortium management, with the local authorities on the one hand, and the Minister on the other, contracting with them to provide a full and diverse range of education. That is clearly not the way that it is going to go—fine. I can see huge problems with that, as I could at the time, but I cannot give you an answer on how this can be resolved because, to a very substantial extent, it is a political issue. As I said, I do not think that it is impossible to resolve it, but the split undoubtedly makes for more work.

[129] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you very much. We are now ready to move to the last group of questions, which are about qualification levels and inspection, which we have not really addressed until now. Janet has the questions.

[130] **Janet Ryder:** I think that you have already signalled that you do not really want to be drawn into the question of what the minimum provision should be—although maybe you have something to add—and, also, there is what the Minister has said about placing the emphasis on level 2, while still making provisions for level 1.

[131] **Sir Adrian Webb:** I do not really want to be drawn into those areas, partly because, even though the review was finished only a short while ago, I have already lost contact with the detail—you do lose contact with the detail. Let us be honest, this is an area where the detail is absolutely critical, so I would not want to be drawn into developing models.

[132] In terms of levels, as chair of the Wales Employment and Skills Board, I am the Wales commissioner and I sit on the UK Commission for Employment and Skills. As a result of Lord Leitch's report in England, there is something of a fixation—I was going to say 'obsession', but I probably should not do so in a recorded meeting—with targets for levels. My argument in UKCES in terms of Wales is that that does not make a lot of sense, because we must recognise that we have an economy in Wales that is not the economy that we need to have in 10 years' time. If we have the same economy in 10 years' time as we have now, we will be in deep trouble. If that is the case, it is very difficult to predict exactly what kind of performance you need at what levels in order to take the economy forward. You have to ask what performance at what level fits with the ambitions of learners and the needs of the future employers in the Welsh economy. That takes you into some very difficult areas. My starting point, therefore, is that basic skills are fundamental. If people do not have basic skills, they are disenfranchised in a modern world. Beyond that, as I said, I think that it is about the performance at different levels that meets the aspirations of individuals on one hand and, on the other, the needs of future employers in the Welsh economy. So, that requires, to a significant degree, collaboration between DCELLS and the Department for the Economy and Transport—I am trying to be involved in that as the chair of WESB—in talking about what knowledge and skills will be needed at what levels in the Welsh economy going forward. It is hard to imagine that a successful Welsh economy in the future would function without many more people being educated and trained to higher levels than is the case now. So, I would assume that performance at levels 1, 2 and 3 is absolutely fundamental.

[133] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Janet has a further question, and then there will be a question about inspections.

[134] **Sir Adrian Webb:** Sorry, I just wish to add that the other end, the very top end, is the only area where, internationally, one can say that research evidence shows that high-level skills drive economic performance. At every other level, there is a correlation between the level of skills and economic performance, but it is not clear whether you build in the skills after you get the economic performance or whether you build in the skills and that drives the economic performance. We must be cautious. Scotland is much more skilled than we are, but its economy is not performing markedly better than ours in terms of GVA per capita. So, you must be very careful about this as there is a real potential of overskilling; there is no doubt that you can overskill.

10.20 a.m.

[135] You have to look at the absorptive capacity of the economy for different levels and skills. It is true that, at the top, there seems to be a causal relationship, but it may not be that having a large number of graduates with high-level skills causes economic development; it is probably the large transfer of knowledge from universities and FE colleges into the economy that drives economic development—it is not the graduates themselves, but the transfer of the knowledge. This is a different issue perhaps, but we must consider how the HE system relates to the needs of our economy. This Measure is very HE-light, is it not? Do we really believe that higher education has no involvement in 14-19 education? I strongly believe that it should be involved in 14-19 education.

[136] **Jeff Cuthbert:** That is a fair point. Janet, would you like to move on to the final question?

[137] **Janet Ryder:** I have one last question on Estyn, but I have one other question that I wish to ask you before we finish. What role do you envisage for Estyn in monitoring the quality of the collaboration between the partnerships?

[138] **Sir Adrian Webb:** Supposing that you were extraordinarily bold and radical and you included in the Measure the kinds of duties and accountabilities for headteachers and governing bodies that I have been talking about, in terms of basic skills, facilitating and sharing staff, ensuring independent careers and course advice, and collaborating to drive towards a maximum, someone has to assess whether people are performing. That does not only mean Estyn, but Estyn does have a crucial role in making judgments about whether our institutions are performing and, more critically, whether they are performing in the context of the local needs of a group of learners. As I said before, the difficulty is that all the performance indicators and awards systems drive the performance of individual institutions; someone must start to drive the performance of the set of institutions. The kind of duties and accountabilities that I am talking about would help to include that on the face of legislation.

[139] However, a body such as Estyn has to assess at a local level whether a school is performing well, not only on its own terms, but in terms of supporting the group of institutions at the local level that is going to deliver a local curriculum. That is partly about quantitative measures on the performance of pupils and outcomes, and you can use measures for the number of programmes that are provided across institutions and the amount of staff and student movement between institutions, if you like. However, I think that, fundamentally, it is also about being judgmental. Someone—it must be Estyn in part—has to ask, ‘Do we feel that this institution and this group of institutions are really working hard for the interests of the learner as opposed to sitting within their institutional boundaries?’. That is about being judgmental—of course it is. Estyn made some very interesting comments about the lack of collaboration within the existing 14-19 pathways; it is pretty tough stuff. It was judgmental, but we heeded it, and we must heed that kind of judgmental view of how well or badly we are performing. Ultimately, it will all show up in international performance league tables.

[140] **Janet Ryder:** You just mentioned a number of issues that you think need to be included in the Measure.

[141] **Sir Adrian Webb:** They could be included.

[142] **Janet Ryder:** That could happen during the next stage, or it happen during this process and we could still keep to the timetable. However, you have also repeatedly mentioned the need to have pilot schemes, and we know that if you run a pilot scheme, you want to go back and change things. I will ask you a question that I asked earlier: is now the right time to legislate or should we run a pilot scheme first, learn the lessons and then legislate?

[143] **Sir Adrian Webb:** I think that you must legislate now; it is absolutely critical that you do so, because you must build the momentum, and I think that this Measure will help to do that. I accept that things may need to be changed subsequently, but the very fact that we have the legislative powers should mean that you can modify what happens in the future. The Measure is not so detailed that we could not change policy and practice on the ground without changing the legislative framework into the future. I think that it is absolutely critical that you have the legislative framework now so that it starts the momentum and begins to start changing minds and behaviours. As I said, in order for that to happen, I would include some clearer duties and accountabilities that are based in statute.

[144] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Christine Chapman will ask the last supplementary question.

[145] **Christine Chapman:** On that issue, we are looking at legislation and whether or not

the timescale is right, and you said that it will build momentum. Parents who are looking at this might have concerns about whether this system has been tried and tested and whether following the timetable as it is laid out would mean that the future of their sons or daughters would be jeopardised because we may not have everything right. I am just suggesting that that may be the view of parents who are looking on and are not involved in the system.

[146] **Sir Adrian Webb:** If this Measure stated, ‘There will be a tertiary system in every part of Wales’, I would agree with you, because you would then be imposing a single model right across Wales without any notion of local variability or fitness for local purpose. This Measure states that we must drive forward with certain ambitions and goals in mind, but it allows the localities to come up with different ideas about how they are going to do that. In some areas, they may introduce the tertiary system, as I said, but in others they may introduce the kind of consortia that we were talking about. In other cases, there is no doubt that they will introduce a rather looser network of institutions, which may or may not deliver. I am saying that this Measure is not taking a total leap into the dark in terms of how things will be done, because it allows a lot of freedom of movement at a local level to propose actual models. If you are going to move quickly, that is right. What I was suggesting with regard to piloting is that with some of the more radical models, it is valuable to pilot because you must overcome the doubts, worries and uncertainties and you must solve the practical problems. To go back to the Wolverhampton consortium model, it took several years to resolve the practical problems there. We should not reinvent every darn thing ourselves. There are models out there that are working in different parts of the UK and abroad—why just look at the UK when there are interesting models in other countries too?

[147] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you. I am going to draw the discussion to a conclusion now, because we are coming up to 10.30 a.m. and that is our absolute deadline. I wish to thank you, Sir Adrian, for coming to the meeting today and for the evidence that you have provided. If there is anything further that you wish to add that you have not been able to mention, by all means write to us with those additional comments. The clerk will send you a transcript of the proceedings, and we would be grateful if you could check it for accuracy.

[148] **Sir Adrian Webb:** Thank you. I apologise for the problems with my phone.

[149] **Jeff Cuthbert:** That is all right. You can leave the £10 on the table. [*Laughter.*] I remind Members that our next meeting will be held on Thursday next week, when John Griffiths, the Deputy Minister for Skills, will come before us. We will then be moving towards drafting our report. Thank you very much.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.28 a.m.  
The meeting ended at 10.28 a.m.*