



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

**Y Pwyllgor Deisebau
The Petitions Committee**

**Dydd Mawrth, 2 Tachwedd 2010
Tuesday, 2 November 2010**

Cynnwys
Contents

- 3 Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions
- 4 Sesiwn Dystiolaeth: Ymchwiliad ar Ddysgu Seiliedig ar Waith ar gyfer Pobl Ifanc
Agored i Niwed—Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg a Dysgu Gydol Oes
Evidence Session: Work-based Learning for Vulnerable Young People Inquiry—The
Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning
- 12 Sesiwn Dystiolaeth: Ymchwiliad ar Ddysgu Seiliedig ar Waith ar gyfer Pobl Ifanc
Agored i Niwed—Canolfan Byd Gwaith a'r Adran Gwaith a Phensiynau
Evidence Session: Work-based Learning for Vulnerable Young People Inquiry—
Jobcentre Plus and Department for Work and Pensions
- 22 Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions
- 22 Cynnig Trefniadol
Procedural Motion

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

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

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Christine Chapman	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Andrew R.T. Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Veronica German	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Leanne Wood	Plaid Cymru (yn dirprwyo ar ran Bethan Jenkins) The Party of Wales (substitute for Bethan Jenkins)

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Leighton Andrews	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg a Dysgu Gydol Oes) Assembly Member, Labour (Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning)
Linda Badman	Cyfarwyddwr, Canolfan Byd Gwaith, Cymru Director, Jobcentre Plus, Wales
Andrew Clark	Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr Dros Dro, Polisi Addysg Uwch ac Addysg Bellach, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Acting Deputy Director, Higher Education and Further Education Policy, Welsh Assembly Government
Rowan Foster	Is-adran Cyflogi Pobl Ifanc, yr Adran Gwaith a Phensiynau Young People's Employment Division, Department for Work and Pensions
Teresa Holdsworth	Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr yr Is-adran Busnes a Sgiliau, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Deputy Director of Business and Skills Division, Welsh Assembly Government
June Price	Rheolwr Cyswllt Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru/Cronfa Swyddi'r Dyfodol, Canolfan Byd Gwaith Cymru Welsh Assembly Government Liaison Manager/Future Jobs Fund Manager, Jobcentre Plus Wales

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Daniel Collier	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Joanest Jackson	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Naomi Stocks	Clerc Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 8.58 a.m.
The meeting began at 8.58 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Christine Chapman:** I welcome everyone to the Assembly's Petitions Committee.

We have received an apology from Bethan Jenkins; Leanne Wood is substituting for Bethan.

8.58 a.m.

Sesiwn Dystiolaeth: Ymchwiliad ar Ddysgu Seiliedig ar Waith ar gyfer Pobl Ifanc Agored i Niwed—Y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg a Dysgu Gydol Oes
Evidence Session: Work-based Learning for Vulnerable Young People Inquiry—
The Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning

[2] **Christine Chapman:** This evidence session is part of our inquiry into work-based learning provision for vulnerable young people. I welcome you to the meeting, Minister, along with your officials Teresa Holdsworth and Andrew Clark.

[3] We have read the paper that you submitted. I do not know whether you want to say a few words or go straight into questions.

[4] **The Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning (Leighton Andrews):** I have a couple of things that I would like to say at the beginning. First, I thank you for the opportunity to give evidence on an area of policy that is obviously important to us. I have seen the transcript of evidence from other witnesses, and I should start by saying that some of the issues that have been raised at this committee have been aired in substantial detail in inquiries undertaken by the Enterprise and Learning Committee—both on the subject of young people not in education, employment and training, and also in respect of learners with autistic spectrum disorder, on which I have given evidence during the course of 2010.

[5] I look forward to the committee's conclusions and will be pleased to consider them. This inquiry is timely, in that we are tendering the contract for work-based learning and considering our response to the review of Careers Wales that was carried out by an external team chaired by the former principal of Coleg Menai. During the course of this year, I have established an internal review of all our work relating to young people not in education, employment or training, and a review of youth unemployment, carried out by a task and finish group chaired by the general secretary of the Wales Trades Union Congress. That has looked at what we can do to address gaps in provision and the duplication of schemes.

9.00 a.m.

[6] The Wales Employment and Skills Board chaired by Sir Adrian Webb has also done extensive work on youth unemployment. The issues raised by the petitioners are very much on our agenda. We want to ensure that our work-based learning programmes are structured to meet the training needs of vulnerable young people to help them to move into meaningful employment. We also want to ensure that young people who are disabled or have learning difficulties are properly supported to develop the skills that they need to secure satisfying careers. Of course, we can always do better. It is therefore important to me that we have a culture of seeking continuous improvement in the services that we deliver to the most vulnerable. Suggestions from this committee would be very welcome.

[7] There is, of course, a wider context. Schemes that have given opportunities to vulnerable young people, such as the Future Jobs programme, are being wound up. As I have said before, that is deeply disappointing. Wales had a strong programme of contracts through the Future Jobs programme, and many vulnerable young people are benefitting from them. I have visited several of these schemes over recent months. The uncertainty out there about the future, not least within third sector organisations, is worrying. We are obviously engaging with the UK Government on its plans for the new work programme, and we all want to see proper recognition of the needs of vulnerable young people. Happily, unlike in England,

where the UK Government has decided to abolish the education maintenance allowance, the Welsh Assembly Government will be keeping EMAs. So, a form of support available to some of our most vulnerable young people will continue. We also have SkillBuild, which will continue. These are important programmes.

[8] Members of the committee do not need telling that these are difficult times for public finances and that we have severe pressures on our budgets. Wales has been hard hit in the comprehensive spending review. Our obligation is to get the best value for money for our investment, and we will seek to do that while making the best provision that we can for the most vulnerable.

[9] **Christine Chapman:** Before I start the questions, we have notified you that we will also question you on issues arising from the petition submitted by Mencap Cymru, which calls for improved employment opportunities for people who have learning disabilities. We will do that at the end of this questioning.

[10] **Leighton Andrews:** I am happy to answer questions on the education and training policies of the Assembly Government, but, clearly, I cannot answer on matters to do with the employment of civil servants, on which you would need to seek evidence from the Permanent Secretary.

[11] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. Going back to the inquiry into work-based learning, the evidence that we have heard suggests that, while it works for many participants, it is not working for the most vulnerable. We have heard that the current system does not enable individual learning styles or needs to be taken into account. Is that a fair criticism? If so, how do you plan to address those concerns?

[12] **Leighton Andrews:** Chair, I do not agree that the evidence that you have heard suggests that work-based learning is not working for the most vulnerable. Indeed, I read the transcripts of the evidence from ACT and Rathbone, and they gave good examples of how they are providing support for the most vulnerable. Within our range of schemes, there may be some people who are not benefitting as much as they might, but there are clearly good schemes for vulnerable people being run by reputable providers.

[13] **Christine Chapman:** Many problems faced by learners can stem from a lack of basic skills, which are frequently the result of poor school experiences, yet often the environment for, and method of, teaching basic skills do not equip learners with these skills. How are you seeking to improve the acquisition of basic skills within the work-based learning programme?

[14] **Leighton Andrews:** There are issues in the schooling system with the provision of basic skills, which is why I have announced a national literacy programme to focus on seven to 11-year-olds. I do not believe that we can solve these problems at the age of 16 or after. Many of them should be dealt with in the school system, and that is why we have announced additional resources specifically for that kind of programme, which has been well supported. When people enter work-based learning, we expect their basic skills needs to be properly assessed. Providers do that. Therefore, programmes should be developed that are tailored to the needs of individual learners.

[15] **Christine Chapman:** This is my final question in this part of the session. What is the Welsh Assembly Government doing to encourage employers to participate in work-based learning?

[16] **Leighton Andrews:** We seek to encourage the widest possible range of vocational experience, provided through work-based learning providers. They themselves will make contact with employers to obtain opportunities for young people. We will pay for the training

and pay the allowance to the young person, although we encourage employers to make a contribution to the allowance.

[17] The UK Commission for Employment and Skills is currently doing work on how to engage better with employers. Its findings will be published in April 2011. Sir Adrian Webb represents us as the Welsh commissioner on that, and we will be looking at those recommendations to see whether there are any further ways in which to take those forward in Wales.

[18] **Leanne Wood:** Chair, I wonder whether I could go back to one of the questions that you asked about basic skills. Minister, you said that you have a literacy programme for seven to 11-year-olds, because it is a problem that you cannot solve at the age of 16. Do you have evidence for that? Have you looked at the evidence of what can be provided to people who do not have those basic skills at age 16? I know that it is difficult, but is it impossible?

[19] **Leighton Andrews:** Let me say that we are not stopping programmes for basic skills post 16; they are continuing in the school and further education environments and in work-based learning. Over the course of this year, we have evaluated in great detail all the evidence on why we have such a significant number of young people who are not in employment, education or training, and the evidence that we have gathered demonstrates that if we are really to crack the problem in the long term, we have to ensure that appropriate support is being given to key standards and basic skills within the school system. So, I want to see a renewed emphasis on that. That does not mean that we stop catch-up programmes or programmes for people post 16.

[20] **Leanne Wood:** You say that you are not stopping programmes, but that does not sound as though you are being very proactive. Why not run a literacy programme for people post 16?

[21] **Leighton Andrews:** We are.

[22] **Leanne Wood:** Can you explain what that is?

[23] **Leighton Andrews:** We have run basic skills programmes for adults, and we have run catch-up programmes for families. There is a whole series of schemes going on around Wales. We can provide you with a lengthy note on that if you would like to have it, but those programmes have been going on for many years.

[24] **Leanne Wood:** Are they successful?

[25] **Leighton Andrews:** Sometimes they are, clearly, and sometimes they are not. There are groups of people who are vulnerable and who are very hard to reach. If you look at the evidence that we have already supplied to the committee, you will find examples of the work that is being done in this area.

[26] **Leanne Wood:** Thanks very much for that. Some organisations have given evidence to the committee indicating that the performance management system can include perverse incentives that can result in providers cherry-picking learners. Do you think that that is a fair criticism? If so, what plans do you have to address that in the new work-based learning contracts?

[27] **Leighton Andrews:** I do not think that there is much evidence of cherry-picking, in fact. There is certainly no clear evidence. I suppose that, in a programme such as this, there is always a danger that providers would be drawn to targeting, but I am not sure that we have real evidence of it. Clearly, in the new work-based learning programme, we are looking to

provide rewards for progression to learning at a higher level for all young people. So I hope that we will avoid that situation with the new contracts.

[28] **Leanne Wood:** Training providers have highlighted the fact that there are no appropriate mechanisms to address poor provision and that Careers Wales services do not always raise issues relating to poor performance. How do you respond to those views? Do you think that there is a sufficiently robust performance management framework? Do you feel that there is enough Estyn inspection of work-based learning?

[29] **Leighton Andrews:** I certainly think that Estyn is carrying out the appropriate number of inspections of work-based learning providers. The evidence that we have shows that most of those are performing to a high standard. The issue is that there will be ways in which we need to track that and in which we need to give feedback on that. However, I think that the Estyn inspection regime is quite robust. It has introduced a set of core indicators, which will enable us to look at any suppliers that are underperforming or coasting. So, when we get reports back that a provider has received only an adequate score—or worse, in a tiny minority of cases—the provider will have to provide us with a plan of action for addressing those failings, and we will follow that up with them.

[30] We are currently considering our overall approach to Careers Wales on the back of the report, as I mentioned in my opening statement. If there are any particular issues that relate to Careers Wales, we will be pleased to hear those from the committee.

[31] **Leanne Wood:** Another issue that has been raised is that the service provided by Careers Wales varies across the country, especially in relation to vulnerable people. How can you ensure that the service levels are consistent throughout Wales?

[32] **Leighton Andrews:** One way in which we can ensure consistency is by adopting a unitary structure for Careers Wales, which is what I announced as our plan at the beginning of the year. We are currently working on the most appropriate way to develop a unitary structure. I hope that that will enable us to ensure more consistency throughout Wales.

[33] **Leanne Wood:** The Department for Work and Pensions has recently announced that it intends to replace many existing national employment programmes with a new single work programme in the summer of 2011. That will entail the termination of the young person's guarantee, under which the SkillBuild programme is delivered in Wales. Will these steps have an impact on work-based learning provision in Wales in any way?

[34] **Leighton Andrews:** SkillBuild is not delivered under the young person's guarantee, Chair. Work-based learning is a separate programme, delivered under a separate funding stream. We have put in additional support to the young person's guarantee. As I said in my opening statement, we are disappointed at the cessation of certain schemes by the UK Government, including that and the Future Jobs programme. However, we will continue to support SkillBuild. It is one of our programmes. We are waiting to hear from the UK Government about the new single work programme and the impact that it will have on the new adult work-based learning programme.

[35] **Leanne Wood:** Finally from me, we have heard some anecdotal evidence that young people on basic skills programmes simply move between those programmes and do not progress in any way. The churn rate is not monitored. Can you explain why that is the case?

[36] **Leighton Andrews:** What we are trying to do, particularly with SkillBuild, is monitor the progression from the programme into learning or employment, and we collect data on that from providers. From 2010-11, we are going to strengthen the requirements for the reporting of data, so that there will have to be specific evidence of learners progressing to

employment or learning at a higher level. So, we are also going to specify more closely the duration of that further learning or employment. We are setting a minimum performance target for progression in the work-based learning contracts from August 2011, and we are currently also trying to establish performance thresholds for the next few years, which we will issue to providers next September. Those will include challenging targets for the achievement of a performance rating regarded as excellent.

[37] **Leanne Wood:** So, we will be able to monitor the churn rate in future.

[38] **Leighton Andrews:** For me, the issue was always to what extent you should spend more money on monitoring than on the actual programme. It seems to me that there is always a bit of a trade-off between the amount of inspection and monitoring and the delivery, because every pound that we spend on inspection or monitoring is a pound less that we have to put into the training programmes themselves, particularly in a difficult financial environment. So, I think that we have to strike a balance here, but we are certainly looking to tighten the performance criteria, and we will certainly consider the issue of churn as we look at that.

[39] **Christine Chapman:** We are going to turn to some questions on financial support now, and I will bring Andrew in.

[40] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Thank you for your written and oral evidence so far this morning, Minister. The evidence that we have received indicates that there is a great deal of pressure on young people who are trying to access work-based training and, in particular, the various forms of support that they are able to get. The training maintenance allowance has not been reviewed for a considerable time and is available only on certain courses. Is there a reason why it has not been reviewed, or is a review pending?

[41] **Leighton Andrews:** I am sorry, but I do not know what you mean by the training maintenance allowance.

[42] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** The training maintenance allowance is offered to people progressing through the system.

[43] **Leighton Andrews:** No, there are education maintenance allowances and then there are learning allowances paid through the SkillBuild programme and Jobcentre Plus. I am not sure what you are talking about with respect to a training maintenance allowance.

[44] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** That is information that we have before us from people, that this is the support that is offered to them.

[45] **Leighton Andrews:** Chair, I will answer questions according to the facts, but I do not know what you mean when you refer to a training maintenance allowance.

[46] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** We will have to give that one a miss then. With regard to the support offered, Careers Wales recently undertook a survey of young people, who spoke about the support available to them. One quotation was: 'Mad, disgusting and utterly stupid'. Others described themselves as speechless. In light of the financial difficulties that some of the students face, living on £50 a week, is there any justification for reducing certain allowances and do you have any intention of protecting people on the lowest allowance?

[47] **Leighton Andrews:** Again, I think that there are some problems with the constitution of these questions, which are not based on facts. As I said in my opening statement, unlike in England, where the UK Government has decided to abolish the education maintenance allowance, we are keeping the education maintenance allowance in Wales. We also provide

support through SkillBuild to learners. In certain circumstances, they are also able to access additional support through the Department for Work and Pensions, and, of course, there are DWP schemes supporting adult learners as well. So, I think that we need to be specific about the question.

[48] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So, you do not recognise the training maintenance allowance. Perhaps it is my fault or the committee's fault for constructing certain questions based on evidence taken. However, it clearly says here that the training maintenance allowance is being introduced and that it is only for some courses.

[49] **Leighton Andrews:** I am happy to answer questions about what we are or are not doing, but I find it hard to answer questions that bear no relation to the system that is in operation.

[50] **Christine Chapman:** This has been referred to in evidence. We need to go back to the evidence and check it, but it has been referred to as you will see if you look at the transcript. Obviously, we will have to check that.

[51] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Just to reiterate then, you do not recognise the training maintenance allowance or you do not understand what it is.

[52] **Leighton Andrews:** Perhaps I can try to be helpful to you—

[53] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I do not need help; it is in the evidence given to us.

[54] **Leighton Andrews:** In one of the transcripts, I saw that some of the organisations were asking specifically for the creation of a training maintenance allowance. That was a different thing. As I explained, we have an education maintenance allowance and we have a learning allowance available through SkillBuild. I think that there has been some confusion in the formulation of the committee's questions today, I am afraid, Chair.

[55] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** We will check them.

[56] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, we will check.

[57] **Leighton Andrews:** If you want to follow this up, we will be happy to provide you with a note.

[58] **Christine Chapman:** That would be useful.

[59] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** One of the big costs for people in rural areas is travel, which can be a barrier to accessing courses. Are there any measures that you as a Minister are able to highlight to the committee to help mitigate travel costs for people who want to access work-based training?

[60] **Leighton Andrews:** Learners who are on work-based learning programmes who are not employed may be eligible to receive a contribution towards travel costs in excess of £5 per week. Learners may claim towards necessary reasonable travelling expenses incurred in connection with travel to and from their place of learning.

[61] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I think that we need to check the rest of the questions.

[62] **Christine Chapman:** Yes, we will do that. We will move on to Veronica now for questions on personal support.

[63] **Veronica German:** One of the other things that we heard about in evidence was inconsistencies in the level and quality of personal support offered to this group of people. That is obviously very important. From what I can remember of the evidence that we received, it was particularly variable with some of the smaller providers. What plans do you have to ensure that all providers, regardless of size, are able to offer adequate levels of personal support?

[64] **Leighton Andrews:** In the tendering exercise that we have recently undertaken, we have made it clear that a learning coach support function should be provided by all providers, regardless of size. On top of that, additional support, advice and guidance are provided by Careers Wales.

[65] **Veronica German:** How are you going to ensure that they do that?

[66] **Leighton Andrews:** We have specified it in the tender, and we will follow that in the award of the contracts.

[67] **Veronica German:** Personal support is quite subjective, is it not? It will have to be provided in a useful way.

9.20 a.m.

[68] **Leighton Andrews:** We have specified a learning coach function, which has been the subject of debate in the Assembly over some time in respect of the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 and so on. Therefore, I think that people are very clear as to what that particular function means.

[69] **Veronica German:** In your written evidence, you highlight that those who were formerly in care and who choose to live independently will have a personal adviser assigned to them. How successful is this arrangement and do you feel that those in this cohort who are living independently but have not been in care would benefit from such support?

[70] **Leighton Andrews:** There is a process for appointing a personal adviser. There is meant to be agreement of a pathway plan before the young person is 16 and before they leave compulsory education. Planning is very much focused on the individual. The pathway plan that is agreed with individuals is based on an assessment of their need and is regularly reviewed. There will be an extension of the entitlement to a contract from the age of 21 to 25 this autumn, following the commencement of the Children and Young Persons Act 2008. Clearly, personal advisers can also work with a range of partners, including Careers Wales, to provide impartial advice to learners. A range of provision is available. Clearly, by designating a learning coach function, we are providing routes in future for further support for those who have not been in care.

[71] **Veronica German:** Therefore, they will be able to have access to similar support.

[72] **Leighton Andrews:** As I say, learning coach provision will be specified as a result of the tendering exercise.

[73] **Veronica German:** My next question is on collaboration between agencies and training providers. We have heard about the importance of collaboration and partnership working in achieving successful outcomes. We are also aware that there are pockets of good practice, but that there is a need for effective information sharing and communication. What is the Government doing to help facilitate that?

[74] **Leighton Andrews:** Collaboration is very important to us, and it is central to the

delivery of our agenda post 16 and even earlier, with the 14-19 agenda, for example. Around Wales, we have a series of consortia where we bring together all providers of 14-19 education, and support is given by the Assembly Government. It is very important that they include, among the providers, not only schools and FE colleges, but also work-based learning providers. I am pleased that the National Training Federation for Wales has been very supportive of what we have been doing through our transformation policy and it has been working to ensure that the work-based learning sector makes that contribution to our 14-19 programmes. We have been supporting the National Training Federation for Wales financially so that there is support available for the work-based learning sector for it to play a full role in that collaborative work at a local level.

[75] **Veronica German:** We have also heard that, because providers are reliant on external funding, it is not always conducive to partnership working. I heard what you have just said. However, for example, ITEC has called on the Welsh Government to make funding for the 14-19 network conditional on the full participation of all sectors of education, such as schools, work-based learning providers and FE. How would you respond to that?

[76] **Leighton Andrews:** It is important that all the 14-19 networks engage the work-based learning providers. I am certainly not opposed to the idea of making the funding for them conditional on their ability to do that.

[77] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you, Minister. We have finished our questions for the inquiry, but I will now move on to the petition raised by Mencap Cymru. I appreciate your earlier comments, but Mencap has stated that there is a gap between Government policy and effective implementation because there is no specific focus on people with learning disabilities in the policies. How would you respond to these claims, and do you feel that the specific needs of people with learning disabilities are suitably addressed?

[78] **Leighton Andrews:** As I said in my opening statement, I am sure that we can always do better. However, we have given examples of how there is a specific focus on people with learning disabilities in our policies. For example, the 'Statement of Policy and Practice for Adults with a Learning Disability', which was issued in March 2007, states that:

[79] 'The Welsh Assembly Government believes that it is important that authorities seek to maximise an individual's potential to be gainfully or constructively employed.'

[80] Equally, for learners of school age, the school effectiveness framework places great importance on learners with special educational needs or learning disabilities. Equality is one of the five themes of that framework. As part of the autism spectrum disorder strategy, awareness-raising materials will be launched early in 2011 to give greater support. As you are probably aware and as we explained in our evidence to the Enterprise and Learning Committee earlier this year, we are also supporting pilot schemes in relation to transition key workers through our work on ASD. So, a number of different initiatives are in place. I would hope that, as a result of the pilot scheme work, we will have examples of best practice that we can roll out throughout Wales. I am sure that we can always do better in this field, but, as a Government, we are putting the right emphasis on policies to support people with learning disabilities.

[81] **Veronica German:** We understand that very little data are available to measure the outcomes of skills and learning strategies for people with learning disabilities. How can you measure effectiveness without those data, and why are they not collected?

[82] **Leighton Andrews:** There are data available to measure outcomes for learners with special educational needs. We collect data annually. Until 2008, there was no way of measuring outcomes for learners who had not attained level 1, but then we introduced

national curriculum outcomes for learners with special educational needs. Those indicators are probably working for learners with SEN in mainstream settings, but we perhaps need to look at what we can do for those who are outside formal settings. We are looking at that challenge.

[83] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Mencap has called for its employment model to be embedded into the curriculum for special schools and SEN units of mainstream schools. What are your thoughts on that?

[84] **Leighton Andrews:** We would be happy to explore that. We agree, in principle, that it is important that employment features in transition arrangements for young people with special educational needs. We have given evidence about Trinity Fields School in Caerphilly as one of the examples of where there is good practice. I also mentioned the transition key worker pilot schemes that we are sponsoring as a department. There is evidence of work that is being carried out. Careers Wales also has specific responsibilities in this area and we are open to exploring new approaches. If there are things that we can learn from the Mencap approach, we will be happy to look at that.

[85] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you for those responses, Minister. To clarify, we will write to you regarding the training maintenance allowance so that everyone is absolutely clear as to what we were referring to. We will check the transcript and perhaps you could respond. Thank you for attending and we will send you a copy of the transcript for you to check it for any factual errors.

[86] Our next witnesses have not yet arrived, so I suggest that we suspend the meeting for a few minutes.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 9.29 a.m. a 9.33 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 9.29 a.m. and 9.33 a.m.*

**Sesiwn Dystiolaeth: Ymchwiliad ar Ddysgu Seiliedig ar Waith ar gyfer Pobl Ifanc Agored i Niwed—Canolfan Byd Gwaith a'r Adran Gwaith a Phensiynau
Evidence Session: Work-based Learning for Vulnerable Young People Inquiry—
Jobcentre Plus and Department for Work and Pensions**

[87] **Christine Chapman:** In this part of the meeting, the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus will be giving evidence. I would like to welcome Linda Badman, the director of Jobcentre Plus Wales; June Price, the Welsh Assembly Government liaison manager and Future Jobs fund manager at Jobcentre Plus Wales; and Rowan Foster, from the young people's employment division at the Department for Work and Pensions. Welcome to you all this morning. Would you like to make an opening statement? We have read your papers, but please feel free to make an opening statement before we turn to questions.

[88] **Ms Badman:** We are happy to go straight to questions, Chair.

[89] **Christine Chapman:** Okay; I will start. Although the Welsh Government has specific responsibility for training and learning provision in Wales, you say in your evidence that Jobcentre Plus delivers a number of programmes for those claiming benefits in Wales, including young people. Could you expand on your specific role in helping vulnerable young people and the particular links that you have with work-based learning provision?

[90] **Ms Foster:** A number of our national programmes are available to benefit claimants. In this particular scenario, we tend to talk about unemployment programmes. There are national programmes that we deliver to those in receipt of jobseeker's allowance that can be

accessed by young people over the age of 18 who are on benefits in Wales. That will include the things that we outlined in our evidence, such as work trials. The young person's guarantee is specifically targeted at young people and was introduced because of the recession. In general, young people are dealt with as part of the broader customer group in terms of the national programmes, through the jobseeker's allowance, for example. However, the young person's guarantee is a particular example of something that was brought in for young people that can be accessed by benefit claimants over the age of 18 in Wales.

[91] **Ms Badman:** We tend to allocate specialist advisers for 18 to 24-year-olds. So, we have an element of specialism. That helps when it comes to local partnership working. Our evidence reflects that. What is most important is that we understand what other provision is available at a local level and that we work with local partners. With regard to the younger age group, as you will be aware, it is not customary for 16 and 17-year-olds to receive jobseeker's allowance. Therefore, we have even more specialist advisers who are trained to work specifically with those aged 16 and 17, and they interview hardship cases. Those 16 and 17-year-olds will be vulnerable and harder to help, so a good deal of partnership working goes on to ensure that they are linked up with the appropriate partners in the local community.

[92] **Christine Chapman:** June, would you like to say anything at this point?

[93] **Ms Price:** I do not think that I can add much to what Linda and Rowan have said.

[94] **Christine Chapman:** We have heard evidence that seems to suggest that, while work-based learning works for many participants, it is not working for the most vulnerable. We have also heard that the current system does not allow individual learning styles or needs to be taken into account and that the lack of basic skills is also an obstacle. From your perspective, is this a true reflection of work-based learning provision in Wales?

[95] **Ms Badman:** There are instances where the system has failed to meet individuals' needs. However, that would be the case for any national programme. The key element that would involve Jobcentre Plus would be to take feedback from the training participant, and to work with the training provider and with Careers Wales to ensure that that feedback is taken into account and fed into the Welsh Assembly Government's systems.

[96] A series of meetings is going on at the moment with Welsh Assembly Government colleagues about how we ensure that we have the right systems and processes to improve continuously and work on customer feedback and on the way in which that will feed into the new programme that starts next August. We and our Welsh Assembly Government colleagues would say that it is work in progress. However, it would be hugely ambitious to say that, for every participant, the provision is spot-on. I have no evidence of whether it is more prevalent for vulnerable young people.

[97] **Leanne Wood:** In your paper, you say that the new work programme is to replace many of the existing employment programmes in the summer of 2011. Can you provide us with an early indication of what the new programme will entail and the impact that it will have in Wales, particularly in relation to work-based learning provision?

[98] **Ms Foster:** The intention is that the work programme will replace the range of existing programmes that are available for people on different benefits. This was a particular issue that the new Westminster Government wanted to address when it came to power. For example, someone on a disability benefit could access Pathways to Work, but some people claiming jobseeker's allowance might have a disability that might not be severe enough to claim disability benefit, so they would not be able to access Pathways to Work support because of the benefit that they were on. The idea of the new work programme is to rationalise and streamline it so that there is one work programme for a variety of different

claimants that looks at tailoring support based on their barriers to work. That is the overarching principle of the work programme.

9.40 a.m.

[99] The details of how it will be delivered are still being worked out; it will be delivered from summer 2011 onwards, and we are currently at the stage of invitation to tender, so there is quite a lot of detail still to be discussed. The intention is to have a number of entry points for customers, with the main entry point being at 12 months. Some people from more vulnerable groups may have earlier entry, but that it still to be decided. The difference between the new work programme and what used to be delivered under the Flexible New Deal is that the payment will be far more outcomes-focused and the provider will be funded to achieve a longer-term sustainable job outcome. The other difference will be in the way in which it works. The funding from the Department for Work and Pensions means that we will be investing money in the work programme with the intention that that investment will be paid for from the savings that we will make by getting people off benefits. There will be differential payments for different customer groups, so people who might be perceived to be harder to help—perhaps people who have been on incapacity benefits for a long time—will generate a payment proportionate to the amount of money that we think the provider has saved the Government in getting them into work. That is how the general principle will be applied.

[100] There are ongoing discussions with colleagues in the Welsh Assembly Government and with Welsh Ministers as to what the implications will be for Wales.

[101] **Leanne Wood:** So, the implications are not yet fully clear?

[102] **Ms Foster:** No, they are not.

[103] **Leanne Wood:** Okay. Linked to the work programme, you mentioned that some benefits will be rationalised. For example, the young person's guarantee is going to end. Currently, that offers a guarantee of training to all young people and prevents people from staying on the dole. What impact do you think the ending of the young person's guarantee will have on the most vulnerable young people seeking work and work-based training in Wales?

[104] **Ms Foster:** In policy terms, the young person's guarantee was introduced in response to a particular set of circumstances, namely the recession, the rising claimant count and the rising long-term youth unemployment rate.

[105] **Leanne Wood:** That issue has not gone away yet.

[106] **Ms Foster:** It was always intended to be a temporary measure; it will not be extended as planned into 2012. It will essentially last for as long as it was originally designed. The UK picture for youth unemployment is starting to become more positive. I do not think that the Westminster Government underestimates the scale of the challenge ahead. In terms of jobseeker's allowance flows, on-flows are decreasing and off-flows are returning to the types of rates that we saw pre-recession, which suggests that the key principle of having this as a temporary measure is something that we would want to uphold. The important thing about this type of initiative is that it does not stifle economic growth, as it was always planned to be a temporary measure and will be implemented as such.

[107] **Leanne Wood:** To follow up on that, you say that the picture for youth unemployment UK-wide is starting to look a bit more positive. Is that the case in Wales as well?

[108] **Ms Badman:** Yes, it replicates the UK picture. It is not as positive in Wales compared with all of the other indicators, but it is following the same kind of trend. To build on what Rowan was saying about the work programme, one of the key differences is that previous national programmes have been very prescriptive about what providers should deliver. What is fundamentally different about the work programme is that we are not detailing what provision needs to be provided. Instead, we are saying to providers that they will get paid by results, and doing the right thing for a particular individual will get them the results, which will get them the payment. It is not definitely tied down yet, but we would expect that 18 to 24 year olds would enter the work programme earlier, possibly at the six-month stage, but that has not yet been confirmed. The aim would be for Jobcentre Plus to work with customers before the six month point. You were saying that some of the local provision that we already have, such as work trials, would make a real effort to connect the young person with work first before handing them over to the work programme for what, in a sense, would be an individually tailored programme. As Rowan says, discussions are ongoing with the Welsh Assembly Government about how that connects with the new SkillBuild programme from August.

[109] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** You touched on the Welsh picture, which I want to ask about. There is obviously a difference between what goes on in Wales and in the rest of the United Kingdom. I think that that has been clarified, but perhaps you could give us a stronger taste of the situation. You said that it is not quite as good in Wales. Does that mean that we are not far behind the positives that the rest of the UK is experiencing, or are we just getting over the gain line?

[110] **Ms Badman:** No. You will have to excuse me because I am by no means an economist, but the trends that are prevalent in Wales mirror the UK position. However, pre-recession, and through the recession, things such as the percentage of those economically inactive were higher in Wales. The fact that there has not been a widening of the gap between Wales and the UK as a result of the recession is positive.

[111] **Leanne Wood:** Can you tell us about the general availability of work-based learning in Wales, and are there particular factors that impact on that, such as the current economic climate or the lack of employment placements?

[112] **Ms Badman:** In general, there is a good network of work-based learning providers in Wales. Feedback from my network is that if provision is a bit patchier in some areas, it is in some of the more rural areas where people have to travel further than they may have wanted. Work placements are not a feature of the adult SkillBuild programme, so I am afraid that I cannot comment on that, and not all the providers are the same for the adult programme as for the youth programme. We do not have a great deal of hard evidence that says that there are real problem areas where providers are not available, but I have heard anecdotally that there has been some difficulty, certainly at the height of the recession, in getting placements for the youth programme. However, as I said, I do not have any hard evidence for that.

[113] **Christine Chapman:** What about the availability of placements? I am thinking about the range of placements. Do you want to say something about that? We would all probably say that there is sometimes quite a narrow range of sectors available in certain parts of Wales.

[114] **Ms Badman:** Yes, that is the case. There is not a huge range of sectoral routes across the youth programme, from what I have observed. There is quite a focus on things like construction, administration and retail, so the placements are probably not very striking in their variety. That tends to become more evident if young people move into the apprenticeship programme, where there is perhaps a bit more availability and variety.

[115] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Is that variety lacking because the placements just cannot be found there, or is it a lack of ambition on the courses? In evidence that we received earlier, we heard that there are plenty of places out there. One example put to us was that one provider has around 850 places available and yet is filling only about 660 of them. Is that because there is not that diversity that you can plug into throughout Wales, or is it a lack of ambition when devising the courses and the pathways?

9.50 a.m.

[116] **Ms Badman:** I do not feel qualified to comment on the youth programme. The guarantee that we have been given for the adult programme is that providers will endeavour to provide an appropriate course, if they have a place available, although some providers specialise more in some than others. The adult programme is intended to be flexible. However, the youth programme is not my area of expertise, so I do not know whether the same kind of flexibility is available.

[117] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I asked about young people because the inquiry is about young people. I appreciate that that is not your area of expertise, but that is the evidence that we—and certainly I—want to consider, namely the experiences of young people. However, that is fair enough.

[118] **Christine Chapman:** Leanne has questions on financial support.

[119] **Leanne Wood:** What are your views on the fact that there is a difference in funding for those young people on work-based learning who do not receive the education maintenance allowance, and those in further education, who get the extra £30 a week?

[120] **Ms Foster:** I understand that the educational maintenance policy is set by the Welsh Assembly Government. It is difficult for me to comment on that, but one thing that we have tried to do with young people who claim different benefits is maintain some kind of parity between those on income support and those on the jobseeker's allowance. I understand that the educational maintenance policy is under review, but I do not know a great deal beyond that, I am afraid.

[121] **Leanne Wood:** It is under review on a UK basis, but it is staying in Wales. Do you think that that will have any impact on work-based learning provision?

[122] **Ms Badman:** There is undoubtedly a financial difference. We can comment on why that is technically the case. The training allowance that is available for young people on the SkillBuild programme is a subsistence allowance, and it is designed to keep young people who would otherwise be claiming the jobseeker's allowance. It enables them to take up training and releases them from actively having to seek work. So, it is a like-for-like replacement. The difficulty is that the education maintenance allowance is not a subsistence allowance. It is disregarded for benefit purposes, because it is an incentive to take up specific courses of further education. As it is not intended to be subsistence, you can claim the education maintenance allowance alongside a subsistence benefit. So, the case study quoted in the petition is factually correct: a young person choosing further education over something more vocational will be better off. It is not a matter of opinion; it is fact, and I am not entirely sure whether anything would change that. The benefit regulations are clear on that.

[123] **Leanne Wood:** Do you envisage any other changes as a result of the comprehensive spending review, other than the ones that you have already addressed?

[124] **Ms Foster:** There will be changes to the benefits system. As you know, a fundamental principle of the new Westminster Government's welfare reform agenda is that

the benefits system needs to be simplified and streamlined, and there need to be greater incentives for people to go back to work. The Westminster Government has funded £2 billion for universal credit, which should be coming in during 2013-14. I do not know yet what the details will be regarding which benefits will change and which will be amalgamated, but I hope that the kind of complexity that exists, which I noticed while putting together our written evidence, relating to the different types of benefits for young people and the different kinds of conditions, will be dealt with through this broader programme of streamlining benefits.

[125] **Leanne Wood:** So, we will not see any changes on the ground until 2013-14, will we?

[126] **Ms Foster:** No.

[127] **Leanne Wood:** Given the requirement for those receiving a training allowance to contribute towards their own transport costs, witnesses have told us that some vulnerable young people, in effect, receive less money per week than they would if they were on the jobseeker's allowance, which acts as a disincentive for training. How would you respond to those criticisms?

[128] **Ms Foster:** Essentially, if someone is receiving the jobseeker's allowance, they may be required to cover their transport costs for going to interviews, for example. So, it is not necessarily the case that they will be worse off receiving training than receiving the jobseeker's allowance. There is a reason why young people are required to cover their transport costs, and I guess that that is because of—

[129] **Leanne Wood:** Would it help if young people on the jobseeker's allowance had some sort of additional allowance for transport?

[130] **Ms Badman:** My understanding of the make-up of the jobseeker's allowance is that there is an element of it that covers the cost of coming into the local office to sign on. I can find that out and send a written answer to you.

[131] **Leanne Wood:** I would be interested to know whether that is a varied allowance, because if you live in a rural area, your transport costs would be greater.

[132] **Ms Badman:** I do not think that it is, but there is something in the make-up of the allowance that deals with that, which was decided when the original allowance was set up. This issue also came up when I appeared at an inquiry on rural matters. I believe that there is a requirement in most of our programmes to pay the first £5 of transport costs, and that is because of that element of the jobseeker's allowance. However, I will take that issue away and send a letter to the committee, if we can get that confirmed.

[133] **Leanne Wood:** Finally, some witnesses have told us that benefits can cease for those over 18 years old who are homeless or claiming housing benefit and who are eager to follow a full-time college course. So, the current system, in effect, can prevent those in supported or social housing from progressing in their learning. Is that a fair reflection of the situation?

[134] **Ms Badman:** Yes, it is factual. The jobseeker's allowance is a work-focused benefit, with a requirement actively to seek work and to pursue more than 16 hours of further education. Not fulfilling those requirements precludes you from claiming the allowance. Undoubtedly, for those who are vulnerable, homeless and with high housing costs, not being able to claim housing costs as a part of a jobseeker's allowance claim is a disincentive. I have heard many people say that. Unfortunately, that cannot be addressed in any way other than legally through amending the benefit regulations, because the jobseeker's allowance is a

work-focused benefit.

[135] **Leanne Wood:** So, that situation is not likely to change under the new system.

[136] **Ms Badman:** That is an interesting point, and I will refer back to Rowan's point. I apologise that we are not in a position to comment very much on the universal credit, because we are at the beginning of that particular journey. On working together, our paper talks about the joint employment delivery board, where the Department for Work and Pensions, Jobcentre Plus and the Welsh Assembly Government are aiming, at an early stage, to ensure that the developments across both administrations line up. I will certainly take action to put a couple of the points that have been raised in evidence today into the early thinking. It is an anomaly and it is probably on the list of things that need to be addressed, if not solved, as part of the universal credit. So, that is indeed a factual reflection of the situation.

[137] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Thank you for your written and oral evidence this morning; it is much appreciated. From August 2011, the Welsh Assembly Government is proposing to introduce a training maintenance allowance to replace the current system of financial support for those on certain work-based learning programmes. That will see their funding reduce from the current £50 a week to £30 a week. Many witnesses have been critical of those proposals. Does the DWP or Jobcentre Plus have any views on that change?

[138] **Ms Foster:** From a personal point of view, a reduction from £50 to £30 a week seems—how shall I put it?—difficult.

[139] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** You should be in politics. [*Laughter.*]

10.00 a.m.

[140] **Ms Foster:** From a departmental perspective, it is not our position to comment on the policies of another Government. I am not fully briefed on the rationale for this, so it is difficult for me to comment.

[141] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I am not sure that the Minister has been briefed, either.

[142] **Ms Badman:** Similarly, it is not for me to comment on other policy. Regarding your earlier point about the education maintenance allowance, it brings it in line with EMA and will have a disproportionate impact on those who need some kind of subsistence support. So, undoubtedly, it will have an impact.

[143] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I wish to ask another question, which you may not be able to answer or may need to do some research on. Alternatively, I may have misunderstood the situation. While answering a question from Leanne earlier, you gave evidence on subsistence allowance, as opposed to EMA, which is not used in the calculation of benefit. Has any thought been given to realigning the training allowance with EMA? It might not then be used as a disqualifier for other benefits. Am I making myself clear on this point? I have not heard that rationale, but it might be a logical reason. To me, the drop from £50 to £30 a week seems massive if the same criteria are going to be brought into play. However, if this is going to be brought in on parallel terms with the current EMA—that is, that it would not disqualify a person from receiving other benefits—the rationale might be more logical.

[144] **Ms Badman:** It would be an interesting train of thought. I am not party to the policy discussions on these changes. If the rationale was to say that the training allowance was an incentive, and if it was lined up with the same criteria as the education maintenance allowance, there would need to be some technical reassessment of how it stood in terms of benefits. The process that the EMA went through was that it was considered nationally and

was nationally disregarded in terms of benefit.

[145] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Perhaps we could have some background information on that to see whether there is any substance to the idea. I will now move on to my next question. A common theme identified by witnesses is the need for the DWP and the Welsh Assembly Government to look at how the skills agenda and the welfare agenda can link up more cohesively. Do you have any comments to make on that?

[146] **Ms Badman:** Yes, I do. In doing so, I would like to return to the creation of the joint employment delivery board. I believe that we have a productive relationship across Jobcentre Plus, the DWP and the Welsh Assembly Government in terms of early talks on policy development. We were previously less successful in taking early opportunities to look at how the operational delivery of policies could be lined up better. The creation of the joint employment delivery board with the joint ministerial statement at the beginning of the year has provided us with a better platform to make sure that we do line things up. Work that is being undertaken currently as a result of the joint employment delivery board, which may have already come up in evidence, is looking at how we can better help young people to make the transition at the age of 18 from the care of Careers Wales to Jobcentre Plus. We are looking at intensive vacancy matching to see whether Jobcentre Plus expertise in the labour market can be applied to 16 and 17-year-olds. We are looking at the experience of the employer across the public sector in Wales. We are doing some joint work on that. Although the board is only six or seven months old, we have settled on a good platform for making sure that skills and employment are more joined up.

[147] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** You therefore believe that the board is creating the sense of cohesion that other people have pointed to as something that needed to be addressed. You touched earlier on the issue of personal support, particularly that provided by special advisers to those in the 24 to 26 age bracket.

[148] **Ms Badman:** The age bracket is 18 to 24.

[149] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** We have received evidence on the special advisers that are available for 16 and 17-year-olds. There has been quite a bit of criticism from training providers regarding the quality and level of support that the advisers might be able to offer that age group. Obviously, you are providing those trainers, but would you accept the criticism that, perhaps, you have not been offering the right service for that age group and would you say that you are addressing that at the moment?

[150] **Ms Foster:** In terms of context, advisers for 16 and 17-year-olds at Jobcentre Plus are all about ensuring that those young people have access to the right benefits and can navigate their way through the benefits system. The primary support function for 16 and 17-year-olds in Wales would be Careers Wales. It is responsible for lifestyle support, so the young people can talk to Careers Wales about issues that are bigger than benefits, such as employment and training. In fact, the Jobcentre Plus advisers for 16 and 17-year-olds would not necessarily be the primary providers of support.

[151] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So, really, it is not in their remit. A lot of the criticism has come from the training providers themselves, and you would have thought that they would understand the role of various parties involved in the progression of 16 and 17-year-olds. Does this perhaps show, in your opinion, a lack of understanding of the remit of your advisers?

[152] **Ms Badman:** It is difficult. I would say that advisers for 16 and 17-year-olds are some of our most highly trained advisers. By definition, they are seeing vulnerable young people who will be in some kind of crisis, because that is the only criterion by which they can

claim benefits. They are expected to understand the networks in their area and hand off young people to the appropriate agencies. Rowan is quite correct: responsibility for finding work and training lies with Careers Wales.

[153] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I will move on to the next step—the co-ordination of that support between yourselves, Careers Wales and the training providers. Are you confident that that co-operation is as robust as it needs to be, so that people understand their responsibilities for each individual? If not, could you highlight some examples of where the system is not delivering, and we could do better?

[154] **Ms Badman:** I would reference a previous answer: in the main, the system works well. You can always find individual cases where someone has fallen between the cracks or we have missed something. We have a memorandum of understanding with each of the careers companies that sets out our partnership and obligations to each other. My senior people in Jobcentre Plus meet regularly with their opposite numbers in Careers Wales. As I said, we are looking specifically at handovers at the moment, because we have identified that, collectively, we do not do as well as we could when we hand someone over. When someone reaches 18, they appear in a Jobcentre Plus office as if they are not known to the system at all, and that is something that we have identified through our discussions that could be improved systemically.

[155] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** I presume that that came out of the board that you talked about, which has been in existence for about six months.

[156] **Ms Badman:** Yes, and it was one of the side issues that came out from the Martin Mansfield report on youth unemployment. That is being progressed at the moment. Do you have anything to add on progress with the pilots, June?

[157] **Ms Price:** Jobcentre Plus is working with Welsh Assembly Government colleagues and Careers Wales to set up some short, sharp, vacancy-matching pilots. They are in their infancy and are still being developed. We will probably be looking at two areas in Wales where we will test something very small to see whether we can join up our services better. We will also look at the hand-off between Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus; that will be a feature of one of the pilots. At the moment, there is not much to add—they are very much in the development stage.

[158] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** When are those pilots likely to be up and running?

[159] **Ms Price:** They will be implemented as soon as possible.

[160] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** So, there is no start date and there is no finish date.

[161] **Ms Price:** Originally, it was hoped that we would start towards the end of October, but that slipped into November. The plan is to start them as soon as we can get the detail finalised. We have some more meetings in the next week to move them forward.

[162] **Christine Chapman:** Just to further explore Andrew's point about the support for vulnerable young people, we talked a lot about collaboration and partnership working, and I think that everyone would sign up to that. I am sure that there is good practice out there, but what are the barriers that prevent agencies from working together? We know that it works in some cases but, from your perspective, what is happening when it does not work?

10.10 a.m.

[163] **Ms Foster:** I know that the picture varies across the UK, so there will be some good

examples of people working well together. To some extent, it depends on the personalities of the people involved. That is always the case; there is always the human element in how engaged Careers Wales or, in England, the Connexions advisers are with Jobcentre Plus. That is probably a part of it. As for the other barriers, do you have any thoughts, Linda?

[164] **Ms Badman:** One barrier in Wales is the complexity of structures. There are local authority boundaries, spatial plan boundaries, local strategic plans and so on. There are many structures, which have different accountabilities and slightly different targets, aims and objectives. Getting all that to feed into making a difference for the citizen at a local level is quite a challenge. It is tackled on a number of levels. My expectation is that my district managers work at a local-authority level, feeding into the appropriate local strategic plans and children and youth partnerships, and we also operate at a Wales level. We may spot systemic things, for example, we received some ferocious feedback from Cymorth Cymru, which came from our Wales customer representative group, which said that it felt that we were not providing as good a service as we could to homeless customers, and that has set us off on a specific piece of work. So, we are trying to do it from the top and from the bottom. The complexity of the structures and the funding makes it difficult, and you need to rely on people understanding what is available at a local level and making the connections.

[165] **Ms Foster:** One thing that we are doing some work on in my team and in the department, which I know is a problem in the UK more broadly—I do not know whether it is a specific problem in Wales—and which Linda touched on earlier, is that of the sharing of data and information about young people between organisations. It is right that you need to do a lot to protect people's personal data, but that can sometimes cause problems in terms of, for example, someone turning up at Jobcentre Plus at 18 and not being known to the system. We have been looking to see what legislation is around and whether that would permit us any flexibility and, if not, what we can do about sharing good practice nationally, through the use of consent forms and processes to share information.

[166] **Christine Chapman:** Is that a question of fear on behalf of the client or the organisations themselves? Sometimes they can be a little protective, because it is their organisation. You have also talked about personalities sometimes getting in the way of progress being made on this agenda.

[167] **Ms Badman:** It is a tricky legal issue. We are hoping that, as a result of the short, sharp pilot project—data matching has been part of that, and I believe that there have been some changes to legislation to make things easier—there will be some practical, on-the-ground experience to show how that will work when you come to transfer data from one organisation to another. It is genuinely a complex area.

[168] **Christine Chapman:** To finish, do you have any other issues that you want to raise as part of the inquiry? Is there anything that we have not covered or that you feel is important for us to consider?

[169] **Ms Badman:** No, I do not believe so. I am hopeful that good practice will come out of the pilot schemes that we are about to embark on. I am particularly hopeful that we will be able to do more to make the transition from Careers Wales to Jobcentre Plus productive for the young persons. It is very much a work in progress.

[170] **Christine Chapman:** I thank the three of you for attending this morning; it has been a very useful evidence session. A copy of the Record of Proceedings will be sent to you, and if you have any issues with the transcript, please let us know. Thank you very much for your time.

[171] **Ms Badman:** Thank you.

10.15 a.m.

Deisebau Newydd New Petitions

[172] **Christine Chapman:** We have two new petitions. The first is P-03-303, against homophobic bullying. It was raised by Oliver Townsend and has collected 440 signatures. It was due to close on 30 October. It calls for the Welsh Assembly Government to introduce compulsory guidance on homophobic bullying for all schools as a matter of urgency. I have written to the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning seeking his views on the petition, so we will await his response.

[173] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Chair, could we short-circuit this? There are many organisations that deal with local education authority provision, such as the Welsh Local Government Association, school governors and the National Association of Head Teachers. Would it not be opportune to seek their views? Good practice could be going on. There might be an exemplar project in one of our 22 LEAs or there might be good work going on throughout Wales. Perhaps we could get the views of the WLGA and the NAHT on this.

[174] **Christine Chapman:** That is a good idea.

[175] **Leanne Wood:** It might also help to contact Stonewall.

[176] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. We will do that.

[177] The second new petition today is P-03-304, amendment to the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008. It was raised by Councillor Arfon Jones and collected 17 signatures. It was due to close on 30 October. It calls for the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure to be amended so that the definition of the nearest suitable school for free or subsidised travel includes a reference to the provision of the Welsh curriculum. I have written to the Deputy First Minister seeking his views on the petition. Are you happy to await the response?

[178] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** Could we send this to the legislation committee that is looking at the new proposed Measure that the Deputy First Minister tabled recently and which is going through the Assembly at the moment? I am not sure whether we have referred a petition to a legislation committee before, but this might or might not fall within the scope of the evidence that it is taking.

[179] **Christine Chapman:** I am on that committee, and I would be happy to do that.

[180] **Andrew R.T. Davies:** That is helpful.

[181] **Christine Chapman:** Okay. That concludes our new petitions.

10.17 a.m.

Cynnig Trefniadol Procedural Motion

[182] **Christine Chapman:** I move that

the committee resolves, under Standing Order No. 10.37, to exclude the public from the final part of the meeting.

[183] I see that the committee is in agreement.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion agreed.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10.17 a.m.

The public part of the meeting ended at 10.17 a.m.