



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

**Yr Is-bwyllgor Datblygu Gwledig
The Rural Development Sub-committee**

**Dydd Iau, 6 Mawrth 2008
Thursday, 6 March 2008**

Cynnwys
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Inquiry into Poverty and Deprivation in Rural Wales: Evidence Session on Children
and Young People

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

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Alun Davies | Llafur (Cadeirydd yr Is-bwyllgor) Labour (Sub-committee Chair) |
| Mick Bates | Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats |
| Alun Ffred Jones | Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales |
| Brynle Williams | Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives |

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

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| Lucy Akhtar | Swyddog Datblygu Rhianta, Plant yng Nghymru Parenting Development Officer, Children in Wales |
| Rachel Bennion | Y Ddraig Ffyni Funky Dragon |
| Shôn Devey | Rheolwr Gwasanaethau Plant, Barnardo's Cymru Children's Services Manager, Barnardo's Cymru |
| Kelly Folksman | Y Ddraig Ffyni Funky Dragon |
| Heather Grierson | Y Ddraig Ffyni Funky Dragon |
| Gareth Jones | Swyddog Polisi (Polisi a Gwerthuso Gwasanaethau), Swyddfa Comisiynydd Plant Cymru Policy Officer (Policy and Service Evaluation), Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales |
| Vivienne Laing | Rheolwr Polisi a Materion Cyhoeddus, NCH Cymru Policy and Public Affairs Manager, NCH Cymru |
| Sean O'Neill | Cyfarwyddwr Polisi, Plant yng Nghymru Policy Director, Children in Wales |
| Sara Reid | Is-Gomisiynydd (Cyfathrebu a Chyfranogiad), Swyddfa Comisiynydd Plant Cymru Assistant Commissioner (Communities and Participation), Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales |

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

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| Joanne Clinton | Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk |
| Claire Morris | Clerc Clerk |

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.08 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.08 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Alun Davies:** Galwaf y cyfarfod i **Alun Davies:** I call the meeting to order. I

drefn. Nid wyf am ddarllen y datganiadau arferol—cymeraf y bydd pobl yn deall ein bod yn gweithredu drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg a bod gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd ar gael.

am not going to read the usual announcements—I take it that people are aware that we work through the media of Welsh and English and that a simultaneous translation service is available.

[2] Croesawaf bawb i'r cyfarfod heddiw. Fel y gwyddoch, yr ydym yn parhau â'n gwaith ar dlodi yn y Gymru wledig. Efallai y dylwn atgoffa pawb i ddiffodd eu ffonau symudol, neu o leiaf i beidio â'u hateb yn ystod y cyfarfod.

I welcome everyone to today's meeting. As you know, we are continuing with our work on poverty in rural Wales. Perhaps I should remind everyone to switch off their mobile phones, or at least not to answer them during the meeting.

9.09 a.m.

**Ymchwiliad i Dlodi ac Amddifadedd yn y Gymru Wledig: Sesiwn Dystiolaeth
Ynghylch Plant a Phobl Ifanc
Inquiry into Poverty and Deprivation in Rural Wales: Evidence Session on
Children and Young People**

[3] **Alun Davies:** Hoffwn groesawu ein tystion i'r cyfarfod heddiw—yr ydym yn gwerthfawrogi eich presenoldeb. Gofynnaf i chi gyflwyno eich hunain ar gyfer y Cofnod a'r papurau sydd gennych. Gwn fod gennych gyflwyniadau gwahanol, felly cyflwynwch eich papurau, ac yna cawn ofyn cwestiynau am y dystiolaeth yr ydych wedi ei rhoi i ni eisoes.

Alun Davies: I wish to welcome our witnesses to today's meeting—we appreciate your attendance. I ask you to introduce yourselves for the Record and present the papers that you have. I know that you have different presentations, so please present your papers, and then we can ask you questions about the evidence that you have already given us.

[4] **Mr Devey:** Fy enw i yw Shôn Devey, ac yr wyf yn rheolwr gwasanaeth plant i Barnardo's Cymru. Mae gennyf brofiad sy'n cwmpasu mwy na 30 o flynyddoedd o weithio mewn cymunedau gwledig ar ddatblygu cymunedol o wahanol fathau ym mhob sector. Yr wyf yma ar ran Barnardo's.

Mr Devey: My name is Shôn Devey, and I am a children's services manager for Barnardo's Cymru. I have experience that spans more than 30 years of working in rural communities on different types of community development in every sector. I am here on behalf of Barnardo's.

9.10 a.m.

[5] Yr wyf yn cofio mynd i Affrica yn y 1970au i wneud gwaith datblygu gwledig. Yr oeddwn yn gyw ifanc a oedd am achub y byd. Deuthum ar draws model sydd wedi rhoi cyfeiriad i mi ers hynny, sef y *centre periphery model*. Yr oedd yn esbonio i mi, yn gyw ifanc ar y pryd, y syniad o ymyloldeb, sef bod grym canolog, a'r pellach yr ydych yn mynd oddi wrth y grym canolog, y mwyaf y mae pobl yn dioddef drwy ddiffyg arian, diffyg cyfleusterau, ac ati. Mae'r model hwnnw yn bod ym mhob rhan o'r byd, yn enwedig yn ein gwlad fach ni. Y broblem yw

I remember going to Africa in the 1970s to do some rural development work. I was young and wanted to save the world. I came across a model that has directed my work since then, namely the centre periphery model. It explained to me, as a young man at the time, the concept of peripherality, namely that there is a central power, and the further you go away from that central power, the more people suffer because of a lack of money, facilities, and so on. That model exists in every part of the world, particularly in our small nation. The problem is

ymyloldeb; mae cefn gwlad Cymru yn ymylol i'r dinasoedd, yr economi, a'r gwasanaethau. Ymyloldeb yw'r prif beth yr hoffwn dynnu sylw ato, felly.

peripherality; rural Wales is peripheral to urban areas, to the economy, and to services. Peripherality is the main issue to which I want to draw attention.

[6] Gwn eich bod wedi cael papur eang gan Barnardo's, felly hoffwn ganolbwyntio ar ddau beth, a'r cyntaf yw tlodi o ran incwm. Gwyddoch oll fod gwaith yng nghefn gwlad yn dueddol o fod yn waith tymor byr gyda chyflogau isel, ond bod costau yn uwch oherwydd yr angen am drafnidiaeth i gyrraedd y lleoedd hyn. Mae problemau hefyd gyda chostau tai a'r nifer sydd ar gael yng nghefn gwlad Cymru.

I know that you have received quite a lengthy paper from Barnardo's, so I would like to concentrate on two things, the first being income poverty. You all know that employment in rural areas tends to be short-term with low wages, but that costs are higher because of the need for transport to reach these areas. There are also problems in relation to the cost of houses and the number of houses available in rural Wales.

[7] Yr ydym hefyd yn poeni am dlodi ymysg pobl sy'n gweithio. Hynny yw, gall symud oddi ar fyw ar fudd-daliadau i weithio olygu bod rhai pobl yn aml yng nghefn gwlad ar eu colled wrth iddynt symud i mewn i'r byd gwaith. Pa riant fyddai'n dewis sefyllfa ariannol waeth, fel bod llai o arian i'r plant a llai o bethau ar gael iddynt? Yr ydym wir yn poeni nad yw'r mater hwn yn cael ei drafod mewn strategaethau sydd er mwyn mynd i'r afael â thlodi plant.

We are also concerned about poverty among the working population. That is, moving away from living on benefits to working means that some people in rural areas often lose out when they try to make that shift to the workplace. What parent would choose to be worse off financially, so that there is less money for the children and fewer things for them? We are greatly concerned that this issue is not being addressed in strategies that are intended to tackle child poverty.

[8] Yr ail beth yr oeddwn am ganolbwyntio arno oedd tlodi o ran gwasanaethau. Bûm yn gweithio ym Mlaenau Ffestiniog am chwe blynedd yn adeiladu gwasanaethau teuluol i Barnardo's, felly mae gennyf brofiad uniongyrchol o'r gwaith hwnnw. Mae'n amlwg bod yr amddifadedd a'r tlodi yng nghefn gwlad yn cael eu cuddio yn ystadegol. Mae gennyf ganmoliaeth fawr i raglenni fel Cychwyn Cadarn a Dechrau'n Deg, sy'n canolbwyntio ar dlodi, ond, yn anffodus, oherwydd y gêm ystadegol, mae'r tlodi gwledig sydd y tu allan i gymunedau gyda phoblogaeth fawr yn cael ei guddio gan ddsbarth canol sy'n eithaf cyfforddus yn ariannol. Yr ydym felly yn poeni nad yw'r gwaith da sy'n cael ei wneud drwy raglenni fel Cychwyn Cadarn yn rholio ymlaen ymhellach i mewn i ardaloedd gwledig.

The second thing that I would like to concentrate on is poverty of services. I worked in Blaenau Ffestiniog for six years building family services for Barnardo's, so I have some direct experience of that work. It is evident that the deprivation and poverty found in rural areas are hidden by statistics. I have nothing but praise for programmes such as Sure Start and Flying Start, which concentrate on poverty, but, unfortunately, because of the statistical game, rural poverty found outside communities with large populations is hidden by a middle class that is fairly comfortably off, financially speaking. We are therefore concerned that the good work that is being done, through schemes such as Sure Start, is not being rolled out further into rural areas.

[9] Gan fy mod wedi rhedeg gwasanaethau gwledig, gwn fod cost ynghlwm wrth gael pobl at y gwasanaethau neu wrth fynd â'r gwasanaethau at y bobl. Nid oes gan Barnardo's ddatrysiad, ond mae'n bwysig ein bod yn gwneud rhywbeth am y problem, gan fod tlodi teuluol yn

Given that I have managed rural services, I am aware of the fact that there is a cost involved in getting people to access services, or in taking the services out to the people. Barnardo's does not have the solution, but it is important that we do something about that problem, because family poverty leads to a

arwain at blant sy'n ei chael hi'n anodd bod yn rhieni da yn y dyfodol. Bydd y broblem yn cynyddu os nad ydym yn cyrraedd y teuluoedd sydd mewn angen.

situation in which children find it difficult to be good parents in the future. The problem will increase unless we reach those families in need.

[10] **Alun Davies:** Diolch yn fawr iawn. Vivienne, a hoffech gyflwyno'ch papur?

Alun Davies: Thank you very much. Vivienne, would you like to introduce your paper?

[11] **Ms Laing:** My name is Vivienne Laing, and I am the policy and public affairs manager for NCH Cymru. I want to highlight a few key points from my paper. The first is a piece of research done in 2003, which was commissioned by NCH Cymru and Barnardo's, called 'The Good Life'. It considered the impact of rural poverty on family life. Our staff say that the issues have not changed, so children and families were disadvantaged by poverty in 2003, and they still are in 2008.

[12] I have some general points to make that follow on from Shôn's contribution. There is such a stark contrast between children, young people and families living in rural poverty, on low incomes, and the situation of their more affluent neighbours. The poverty is more profound in rural areas. Another general point is that there are children and young people and families living in rural poverty in almost every local authority area. NCH Cymru is working with children and families in counties such as Monmouthshire and a key issue is a shortage of suitable affordable accommodation. We have families living in Monmouthshire in council houses that are still reliant on coal fires, and in isolated farm houses where there is no central heating. So, we cannot simply think that Monmouthshire's child poverty rates are so low that it is not a problem; it is a problem throughout Wales.

[13] On solutions, better public transport that caters for children, young people and families, and not just those who go to work, would be one solution. That is essential. We also think that children and young people in full-time education should have free access to public transport so that they can get to activities after school and so on, provided that transport is available. We also think that there should be additional revenue to set up and sustain child care, drop-in youth facilities and after-school activities for those providing services in rural areas. As not so many people attend, you need more revenue to make those services sustainable.

[14] We also think that it is crucial, if we put new services in, for children and families to be involved in the planning so that the best use is made of that money, and so that the services meet their needs.

[15] NCH Cymru is also concerned about two particular sub-groups of children, young people and families, namely families with disabled children. There is a great deal of evidence that families with a disabled child are disproportionately likely to be living in poverty. We have many examples of that throughout our services.

[16] The other group is young carers. Evidence from our young carers projects in the north-west is that families with young carers are likely to be living on benefits. So we are also concerned about that sub-group.

[17] **Alun Davies:** Diolch. Sara a Gareth, a hoffech chi gyflwyno eich papur?

Alun Davies: Thank you. Sara and Gareth, would you like to present your paper?

[18] **Ms Reid:** Sara Reid ydw i. Yr wyf yn is-gomisiynydd yn Swyddfa Commisynydd Plant Cymru. Yr wyf yn

Ms Reid: I am Sara Reid. I am an assistant commissioner in the Office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales. I am responsible

gyfrifol am y gwaith polisi a chyfranogi o fewn y sefydliad. Fel y gwyddoch, mae'r comisiynydd newydd wedi dechrau yn ei swydd. Hoffwn ei wneud yn glir na chafodd Keith Towler gyfle i ddarllen y papur a rhoddasom i'ch ymchwiliad gan iddo gael ei baratoi cyn iddo gael ei benodi, ond mae'n annhebygol y byddai'n anghytuno gyda'n sylwadau.

for the policy work and participation in the organisation. As you know, the new commissioner is now in post. I would like to make it clear that Keith Towler did not have the opportunity to read the paper that we submitted for your inquiry because it was prepared before he was appointed, but it is unlikely that he would disagree with our comments.

[19] Byddaf yn siarad am ein pryderon ynghylch cyfeiriad strategol ar gyfer mynd i'r afael a thlodi plant yng Nghymru a'r diffyg sylw a roddir i blant sy'n byw mewn ardaloedd gwledig o fewn y strategaethau hynny. Wedyn, bydd Gareth yn sôn yn fwy penodol am gynlluniau arbennig a lle'r ydym yn gweld gwendidau yn y cynlluniau hynny.

I will speak about our concerns about the strategic direction for tackling child poverty in Wales and the lack of attention given to children living in rural areas in those strategies. Then Gareth will speak more specifically about particular schemes and where we see weaknesses in those schemes.

[20] Ar un lefel, gwelwn fod hyd yn oed yr hyn sy'n digwydd yn y Senedd heddiw yn dangos nad oes cydlynu ar draws y Llywodraeth nac ar draws y gwaith sy'n digwydd i geisio dileu tlodi plant. Fel y gwyddoch, mae Brian Gibbons yn rhoi tystiolaeth i Bwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc y bore yma ar y pwnc penodol o dlodi plant. Yn natganiad diweddar y Gweinidog, nid oedd sôn am dlodi plant o fewn ardaloedd gwledig.

On one level, we see that even what is happening in the Senedd today shows that there is no co-ordination across Government or across all the activities taking place to try to eradicate child poverty. As you know, Brian Gibbons is giving evidence to the Children and Young People Committee this morning on the specific issue of child poverty. In the Minister's recent statement, there was no mention of child poverty in rural areas.

9.20 a.m.

[21] Wrth ymateb i adroddiad blynyddol diweddar y comisiynydd plant, dywedodd y Gweinidog dros Blant, Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau, Jane Hutt, bod sefydlu grŵp o arbenigwyr i edrych ar dlodi plant yn digwydd ar yr un pryd. Hoffwn glywed sylwadau aelodau'r pwyllgor hwn o ran sut mae cyfnewid gwybodaeth a chydlynu camau tuag at y dyfodol yn digwydd ymysg y gwahanol gyrff o fewn y Cynulliad sydd yn ceisio mynd i'r afael â'r pwnc hwn.

In response to the children's commissioner's recent annual report, the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Jane Hutt, said that establishing a group of experts to look at child poverty would happen at the same time. I would like to hear committee members' views on how exchanging information and co-ordinating actions for the future happens between the various bodies within the Assembly that are trying to tackle this issue.

[22] Mae teimlad cryf hefyd—ac mae hyn yn rhywbeth y gwnaeth y cyn-gomisiynydd plant, Peter Clarke, ei godi yn ei adroddiadau, ac yr ydym wedi ei godi yn y wasg—ynglŷn â'r ffaith fod canolbwyntio ar ardaloedd gyda phoblogaeth fawr ac lle mae'r ystadegau yn dangos bod lefel uchel o dlodi ar draws y gymuned. Mae'n golygu bod effaith gyflym a phendant ar yr ystadegau pan yr ydym yn edrych ar draws Cymru, ond mai profiad

There is also a strong feeling—and this is something that the former children's commissioner, Peter Clarke, raised in his reports, and which we have raised in the press—about the fact that there is a focus on areas of large population and where the statistics show that there are high levels of poverty across the community. That means that there is a swift and tangible effect on the statistics when we look across Wales, but the

bywydau plant sydd yn byw y tu allan i'r cymunedau hynny yw nad ydynt yn gweld newid pendant. O'n gwaith uniongyrchol gyda phlant a phobl ifanc, mae plant wedi sôn wrthym eu bod bellach yn gweld y gwahaniaeth rhwng y cyfleusterau a'r cyfleoedd sydd ganddynt i gael mynediad at gyfleoedd hamdden a chyfleoedd i fod yn rhan o gymdeithas fel dinasyddion ifanc, a'r cyfleoedd sydd gan blant eraill, a'u bod ar eu colled felly. Mae plant a phobl ifanc o'r un oedran yn gallu manteisio ar gyfleoedd oherwydd arian Ewropeaidd neu Cymunedau'n Gyntaf a chynlluniau tebyg.

experience of children living outside of those communities is that they have not seen a tangible change. From our direct work with children and young people, children have told us that they now see the difference between the facilities and the opportunities that they have to access leisure opportunities and opportunities to be part of society as young citizens, and those of other children, and that they are therefore at a disadvantage. Children and young people of the same age can take advantage of such opportunities because of European funding or Communities First and similar schemes.

[23] **Mr Jones:** I am Gareth Jones, one of the policy and service evaluation officers of the office of the children's commissioner. I have a few points to add to what Sara said, in terms of the participation work that we do with children and young people. Too many young people from rural areas will draw our attention to their perceived lack of access to activities and opportunities in comparison with their peers in more urban areas. They will point out that there is no swimming pool within their local community perhaps, and that community focus schools initiatives are very difficult for them to access because of a lack of transport to get them home after after-school activities. Therefore, they feel that they are unable to take up those activities because there may not be public transport to enable them to get home—they are tied by the home-to-school transport links.

[24] The right of children not be in poverty is core aim 7 of the Welsh Assembly Government's work for children and young people, and we feel very strongly that all children should have the same entitlements no matter where they live. We wish to highlight the work that Viv mentioned, the 'Good Life' research, which says that in some rural areas, providing the same services costs two or three times as much, and talks of opportunity in a rural location versus in an urban location. Children should have the same entitlements and same rights, whether they live in an urban or rural area.

[25] Finally, we need to listen at a national and local level to the experiences of children and young people living in poverty in rural areas, so that we can help to find the solutions and obtain a greater understanding of the issues that those children face.

[26] **Alun Davies:** Diolch yn fawr, a diolch i bob un ohonoch am eich tystiolaeth a'ch cyflwyniadau. Yr oeddynt yn hynod ddiddorol ac maent wedi codi llawer o bethau yn fy meddwl. Mick, a hoffet ti ddechrau gyda'r cwestiynau?

Alun Davies: Thank you, and thank you all for your evidence and presentations. They were very interesting and they have raised many things in my mind. Mick, do you wish to start with the questions?

[27] **Mick Bates:** Thank you for your opening statements. Before we delve into the issues that give us some indication about rural poverty as opposed to poverty in the Valleys or urban areas, what progress do you think has been made by the Welsh Assembly Government in tackling child poverty and deprivation so far? Do you want to start, Sara?

[28] **Ms Reid:** Most of the focus of our work has been at a systemic, policy-influencing level, and we have been encouraged and involved as observers in trying to offer more practical encouragement of the development of the work of the child poverty task group that was established some time ago, and the development of the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy and the implementation plan. It is something to which we will give further

consideration now that there has been an opportunity for the documents, strategies and policies to be developed, for us to do some more work to evaluate the impact on children's lives. That is what is unclear to us at this point in time. It has been a regular theme within the Assembly that there are often issues around the funding of strategies. At a conceptual level, it seems as if very positive steps are being taken, but further down the line, there may be barriers, bottlenecks or reasons why the experience of individual children and young people is not changed. Certainly, in terms of the statistics, we know for the first time that the figures for Wales were apparently 1 per cent lower than for the rest of Great Britain. However, what we have heard from service providers such as NCH and Barnado's Cymru is that for individual families, those changes are not yet apparent. It is about the families and children living in persistent poverty. We have always known that that is a tougher nut to crack and the issues now are that we are going to have to see more of an acknowledgement of the role of universal services such as health and education in tackling those issues. We are not just looking at pockets of deprivation, which has almost become a cliché; we are looking at actual, real-life experience and at enabling every child to access their rights and fulfil their potential.

[29] **Mick Bates:** Before you answer the question on progress, there are targets of eradicating child poverty by 2020 and halving it by 2010. Is it possible to relate what your vision of progress is against those targets?

[30] **Mr Devey:** I will talk from not a strategic level but more from a service delivery level. I have been very involved with Barnado's, Sure Start, Flying Start and Communities First initiatives, and I know that some fantastic work is ongoing on the ground, using those initiatives to develop very good and effective models of practice, particularly in the early years. If we can get there in the early years, we offset many problems that might appear later on. The problem with that investment is that we have tried to target it statistically and wisely and say 'Right, where are the main pockets of deprivation and how do we get to those?' I absolutely understand that. The problem is that those statistics skew against rural deprivation. They tend to favour pockets of urban deprivation. The challenge to the Assembly is that we have learned of very good practice through those programmes, but it is about how we roll that practice out deeper into rural communities. That is the issue for me. We have ways of working with people, but it is about whether those lessons are going beyond the existing identified areas, or whether they are going to continue getting the support and we leave the rural dimension out of it. That is the challenge. We are making progress. We have the seeds of good practice, but we need to be growing a lot more seedlings and getting them out there, to use a gardening metaphor.

[31] **Alun Davies:** Vivienne, a hoffech ymateb hefyd? Yr wyf yn gwybod bod Brynle am gyfrannu.

Alun Davies: Vivienne, would you also like to respond? I know you want to come in on this, Brynle.

[32] **Brynle Williams:** Hoffwn ofyn cwestiwn ar y pwnc hwn. A oes tystiolaeth bod tlodi yng nghefn gwlad yn dilyn patrwm yr economi amaethyddol? Fel y dywedom, mae llawer o bobl yn dal i gael eu cyflogi yng nghefn gwlad, a chan nad yw'r diwydiant amaethyddol wedi bod yn broffidiol iawn yn ystod y blynyddoedd diwethaf? A oes tystiolaeth bod hyn yn cael effaith? Efallai nad oes, wrth gwrs.

Brynle Williams: I would like to ask a question on this particular issue. Is there any evidence that poverty in rural areas follows the pattern of the agricultural economy? As we have mentioned, a number of people are still employed in rural areas, and the agricultural industry has not been very profitable over the past few years. Is there any evidence that this is having an impact? There may not be, of course.

9.30 a.m.

[33] **Mr Devey:** Gwn fod problem gyda ymchwil i mewn i dlodi gwledig. Mae problem gyffredinol o ran cael gwybodaeth ac ystadegau, ac nid wyf yn ymwybodol o unrhyw ymchwil sy'n dangos y linc rhwng dirywiad y diwydiant amaeth a thlodi yng nghefn gwlad. Fodd bynnag, effaith yr economi, cyflogau isel, gwaith dros dro a'r cynnydd mewn prisiau tai sydd wedi cael yr effaith fwyaf yn ddiweddar. Dyna yw profiad ein mudiad ni. Mae wedi cyrraedd pwynt difrifol iawn.

Mr Devey: I know that there are problems with regard to research into rural poverty. There is a general problem in getting information and statistics, and I am not aware of any research that demonstrates the link between the decline of the agriculture industry and rural poverty. However, the impact of the economy, low wages, the temporary nature of employment and the huge increase in house prices have had the biggest effect recently. That is our experience as an organisation. It has reached a critical point.

[34] **Alun Davies:** Vivienne, a hoffech chi ychwanegu unrhyw beth?

Alun Davies: Vivienne, would you like to add anything?

[35] **Ms Laing:** On Mick's question, the Welsh Assembly Government has done a lot of work on tackling poverty. Core aim 7 and the requirement that local authority partnerships have to co-ordinate their work around child poverty is very useful, and I look forward to the single plans that will come out shortly.

[36] Flying Start, because it is so evidence based, is a good initiative together with community-focused schools. However, my concern about Flying Start is that it is targeted at such specific school catchment areas that, given the dispersed populations—and that is the nature of rural poverty—many of those families will be missed. A lot of our concern relates to that point.

[37] **Mick Bates:** Returning to the evidence base that you mentioned, the Government has a target to halve child poverty by 2010 and to eradicate it by 2020. From what you have seen, do you think that those targets will be met? You can say 'yes' or 'no'.

[38] **Ms Laing:** We think 'no' for the 2010 target.

[39] **Mick Bates:** Do others agree?

[40] **Ms Reid:** The commissioner is on record as saying that we believe that they will be met.

[41] **Mick Bates:** And finally, Mr Devey, what do you think?

[42] **Mr Devey:** I remain to be convinced.

[43] **Alun Davies:** That is unanimity and consensus for you. Why will the Government not meet its target?

[44] **Ms Laing:** Because of the persistent poverty and the fact that progress is now tailing off. Twenty-eight per cent of children in Wales continue to live in poverty and there are many obstacles to reaching children and families living in poverty in rural areas.

[45] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Cyn i mi ofyn fy nghwestiwn, gan ddilyn yr hyn a ddywedwyd, a yw'n wir mai'r hyn sy'n diffinio amddifadedd yn bennaf yw incwm isel neu ddiffyg incwm? A gytunwch mai

Alun Ffred Jones: Before I ask my question, following what has already been said, am I right in saying that what actually defines deprivation is low income or the absence of an income? Do you agree that that is the

dyna'r broblem?

problem?

[46] **Ms Laing:** From our perspective it is down to low income, along with living on benefits.

[47] **Alun Ffred Jones:** A ydych chi'n cytuno, Mr Devey? **Alun Ffred Jones:** Do you agree, Mr Devey?

[48] **Mr Devey:** Byddwn yn cytuno â hynny. **Mr Devey:** I would agree with that.

[49] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Os felly, mae'n deg dweud mai dylanwad ymylol yn unig y gall Llywodraeth y Cynulliad ei gael ar sefyllfa o'r fath oherwydd nid yw'r arfau ariannol ganddi. A yw hwnnw'n osodiad teg? **Alun Ffred Jones:** If so, it would be fair to say that the Assembly Government can have only a peripheral influence on such a situation because it does not have the financial tools. Would that be a fair statement?

[50] **Mr Devey:** Mae potensial i ddyylanwadu. Mae gan y Cynulliad rôl drwy ddyylanwadu ar San Steffan. **Mr Devey:** There is potential to influence. The Assembly has a role in influencing Westminster.

[51] **Ms Reid:** O'n safbwynt ni, gan ein bod yn canolbwyntio ar y plant, yr ydym yn cydnabod bod y rhan fwyaf o blant yn byw gyda'u teuluoedd, felly yr ydym yn poeni ynghylch y diffyg cyfleoedd a'r ffaith nad oes ganddynt y gallu i fanteisio ar yr un cyfleoedd â phlant a phobl ifanc eraill. Mae cyrraedd gwasanaethau'n gallu bod yn broblem. Nid yw'r dyfodol yn eu cymunedau wastad yn glir ac nid oes ganddynt yr un cyfleoedd o ran addysg a hyfforddiant ag sydd gan blant sy'n byw mewn dinasoedd a threfi. Mae nifer o ffactorau eraill ynghylch cyfranogiad, fel fforymau ieuenctid ac yn y blaen. Er enghraifft, mae pobl ifanc sy'n byw ym Mhowys yn wynebu sialens o ran cyfleoedd nad sydd yn bodoli ar gyfer pobl yng Nghaerdydd. **Ms Reid:** From our point of view, given that we are concentrating on the children, we recognise that most children live with their families, therefore we are concerned about the absence of opportunities and the fact that they do not have the ability to take advantage of the same opportunities as other children and young people. Accessing services can be a problem. Their future within their communities is not always clear and they do not have the same education and training opportunities as children who live in cities or towns do. There are many other factors in terms of participation, such as youth fora and so on. For example, young people living in Powys, unlike those who live in Cardiff, face a significant challenge in terms of opportunities.

[52] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Dof at yr agwedd wledig, ond mae'n ymddangos i mi mai'r sylfaen yw incwm isel, diffyg incwm, neu, fel yr ydych yn ei ddweud, bobl yn byw ar fudd-daliadau. Dyna'r craidd. Dylanwad ymylol sydd gan y Cynulliad ar y ffactor hwnnw. Dof at yr agweddau gwledig yn y cwestiwn nesaf. **Alun Ffred Jones:** I will come to the rural aspect, but it seems to me that the basis of this is low income, an absence of income, or, as you say, people living on benefits. That is the core. The Assembly has only a peripheral impact on that. I will come to the rural aspects in the next question.

[53] Mae tri ohonoch, naill ai yn eich cyflwyniadau llafar neu yn eich cyflwyniadau ysgrifenedig, yn cyfeirio at y ffaith bod amddifadedd gwledig wedi'i guddio oherwydd nad yw wedi'i ganolbwyntio All three of you, either in your oral presentations or written submissions, have referred to the fact that rural deprivation is hidden because it is not concentrated in specific areas. The Commission for Rural

mewn ardaloedd penodol. Mae'r Comisiwn Cymunedau Gwledig yn Lloegr wedi dweud yn ddiweddar y dylai polisiâu dargedu pobl ac nid llefydd. A ydych yn cytuno gyda'r gosodiad hwnnw?

[54] **Mr Devey:** Os ydym am ymateb i'r angen gwledig, mae'n rhaid meddwl am bobl ac, i ni fel mudiadau, dyna lle'r ydym yn cychwyn, sef gyda defnyddwyr gwasanaethau a chyda phlant a theuluoedd. Mae perifferoldeb o safbwynt daearyddiaeth sydd yn berthnasol i'r sefyllfa wledig, ond mae hefyd berifferoldeb ym myd polisi ac ym meddwl y Llywodraeth. Dyna sy'n ein poeni ni yn fwy na dim byd arall.

[55] Mae dogfennau'r Cynulliad 'Cynllun Gweithredu Tlodi Plant' a 'Dileu Tlodi Ymhlith Plant yng Nghymru' yn sôn am dlodi plant ond nid ydynt yn sôn am dlodi gwledig. Mae pobl yn gallu dechrau gweithio a gweld bod ganddynt lai o incwm nag a oedd ganddynt ar fudd-daliadau. Mae hynny'n allweddol. O'r hyn a ddeallaf, strategaeth y Cynulliad yw symud pobl oddi ar fudd-daliadau i fyd gwaith fel cam ymlaen mewn bywyd. Os yw'r cam hwnnw yn gam yn ôl i rywun yn ariannol, ni fydd pobl yn ei gymryd gan ei fod yn rhy anodd. Dyna lle mae'r methiant yn digwydd. Mae'n rhaid ffeindio ffordd, drwy systemau trethi a budd-daliadau, i wneud y cam i fyd gwaith yn gam ymlaen yn hytrach na cham yn ôl.

[56] **Alun Ffred Jones:** San Steffan sydd â'r rôl flaenaf o safbwynt penderfynu ar hynny. A oes rhywun arall am wneud sylw ar fy nghwestiwn i?

[57] **Ms Reid:** Byddwn yn cytuno bod ffiniau i'r hyn y gallwn ei gyflawni gan ddefnyddio pwerau'r Cynulliad, ond mae'n bwysig canolbwyntio ar wneud popeth y gallwn i leihau sgîl-ffeithiau tlodi ar deuluoedd ac ar blant. Yr ydym yn edrych ar ryw fath o ymyrraeth bositif a fydd yn torri'r patrwm fel bod gan blant a phobl ifanc obeithion na fyddai yno fel arall.

[58] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Mae polisiâu Llywodraeth y Cynulliad o ran mynd i'r afael ag amddifadedd wedi canolbwyntio'n bennaf ar y mynegai amddifadedd lluosog. Mae hynny'n darparu ystadegau sydd, fel yr ydych

Communities in England has recently said that policies should target people rather than places. Do you agree with that statement?

Mr Devey: If we want to respond to rural need, we have to think about people and, for us as organisations, that is our starting point, namely service users and children and families. There is peripherality in terms of geography, which is relevant to the rural situation, but there is also peripherality in the policy world and in Government thinking. That is what concerns us more than anything else.

The Assembly documents 'Child Poverty Implementation Plan' and 'Eradicating Child Poverty in Wales' talk about child poverty but do not talk about rural poverty. People can start work and find that they have less income than they had on benefits. That is key. The Assembly's strategy, as I understand it, is to move people away from claiming benefits and into work as a step forward in life. If that step is a step backwards for someone financially, he or she is not going to take it, as it is too difficult. That is where the failure occurs. We have to find a way, through the taxation and benefit systems, to make the step into work a step forward rather than a step back.

Alun Ffred Jones: Westminster has the main role with regard to deciding that. Does anyone else want to comment on my question?

Ms Reid: I agree that there are limits to what we can achieve within the Assembly's powers, but it is important to concentrate on doing everything that we can to alleviate the effects of poverty on families and children. We are looking at some sort of positive intervention that will break the pattern so that children and young people have renewed hope that would not otherwise exist.

Alun Ffred Jones: The Assembly Government's policies on tackling deprivation have concentrated mainly on the index of multiple deprivation. That provides statistics that, as you have noted, show the

chi wedi'i nodi, yn dangos y pocedi dwys o fewn y mynegeion—ac mae'r mynegeion eu hunain yn ddiddorol. Felly, os oes gwario ychwanegol yn digwydd o fewn unrhyw raglen, y mynegai amddifadedd lluosog sydd yn arwain hynny, a bydd hynny bob amser yn ffafrio ardaloedd trefol. A ydych yn credu bod y ffordd honno o weithio yn deg? A ydych yn deall y cwestiwn? A gredwch fod y ffordd y defnyddir y mynegai amddifadedd lluosog yn ateb gofynion ardaloedd gwledig?

concentrated pockets within the indices—and the indices themselves are interesting. Therefore, if there is additional expenditure within any programme, it is the index of multiple deprivation that guides that, and that will always favour urban areas. Do you believe that that way of working is fair? Do you understand the question? Do you believe that the way in which the index of multiple deprivation is used meets the needs of rural areas?

9.40 a.m.

[59] **Mr Devey:** O'm mhrofiad i, yn weithredol, nac ydy. O'r hyn yr wyf yn ei ddeall, bu ymdrech i gynnwys ffactorau gwledig yn yr ystadegau, ond maent yn methu'r tloedi a'r amddifadedd gwledig, yn sicr. Fel yr ydych wedi'i ddweud, mae'r arian a'r strategaethau yn dilyn yr ystadegau, mewn ffordd, felly os na allwch ddangos amddifadedd mesuradwy yn yr ystadegau, hyd yn oed os ydych yn gweld teuluoedd mewn angen, mae'n anodd iawn sicrhau adnoddau i weithio gyda'r teuluoedd hynny, oherwydd nid ydynt yn ymddangos yn yr ystadegau. Pan yr ydym ni, fel mudiadau, yn adnabod y teuluoedd mewn angen ond nid ydynt yn ymddangos yn y ffigurau, mae'n amlwg bod rhywbeth yn bod ac mae'n dangos bod problemau gyda'r mesuriadau ystadegol. Mae'n rhaid dod o hyd i ffordd o gynnwys ffactorau gwledig yn yr ystadegau, ond nid wyf yn gwybod sut y gellid gwneud hynny. Nid wyf yn arbenigwr yn y maes.

Mr Devey: From my operational experience, it does not. As I understand it, efforts have been made to include rural factors in the statistics, but they certainly do not identify rural poverty or deprivation. As you have said, the funding and the strategies are based on the statistics, in a way, so unless you can demonstrate measurable deprivation in the statistics, even if you see families in need, it is very difficult to secure resources to work with those families, because they do not appear in the statistics. When we, as organisations, identify the families in need but they do not appear in the figures, there is obviously something wrong and it shows that there are problems with the statistical base. We must find a way of including factors of rurality in those statistics, but I do not know how that can be done. I am no expert in that field.

[60] **Alun Davies:** A oes gan swyddfa comisiynydd plant Cymru unrhyw farn ar hyn?

Alun Davies: Does the office of the children's commissioner for Wales have an opinion on this?

[61] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Hwn yw'r mater pwysig. Prif arf y Llywodraeth yw'r mynegai amddifadedd lluosog. Dyna sy'n arwain at wariant ychwanegol ar wahanol bolisiau mewn gwahanol feysydd. Nid wyf yn gwybod am neb sy'n gwrthwynebu'r gwariant ychwanegol hwnnw, ond nid yw'n cyffwrdd ardaloedd gwledig oherwydd nid ydynt yn ymddangos yn y ffigurau. A ydych yn gyfforddus gyda'r dull hwn y mae'r Llywodraeth yn ei ddefnyddio?

Alun Ffred Jones: This is the important issue. The Government's main tool is the index of multiple deprivation. That is what guides additional expenditure on various policies in different policy areas. I do not know of anyone who is opposed to that additional expenditure, but it does not have an impact on rural areas because they are not identified in the figures. Are you comfortable with the Government's approach?

[62] **Ms Reid:** Credaf y byddai'n rhaid i mi ymgynghori gyda'r comisiynydd cyn

Ms Reid: I think that I would have to consult with the commissioner before making any

gwneud unrhyw sylw neu ymateb i'r pwyllgor. Fodd bynnag, un peth y buaswn yn ei ddweud yw bod gwasanaethau, yn gyffredinol, yn fwy drud i'w darparu mewn ardaloedd gwledig a bod y pethau sy'n gallu helpu i ddileu effeithiau tlodi yn fwy costus. Yr ydym am weld cyfle cyfartal i blant a phobl ifanc. Nid yw hynny bob amser yn fater o ddyrannu'r arian mewn ffordd sy'n cyd-fynd â'r ystadegau—mae angen asesu angen hefyd.

[63] **Alun Davies:** Dyna y mae'r mynegai i fod i'w wneud. Mae Alun Ffred wedi mynegi'r pryder bod y mynegai yn disgrifio Cymru yn ei chyfanrwydd a'i fod yn colli effaith tlodi ar rai ardaloedd yng nghefn gwlad. A allech chi baratoi nodyn ysgrifenedig ar sut y mae swyddfa'r comisiynydd yn ystyried y mynegai a'r ffordd y mae'n gweithio? A yw'r mynegai'n ddigonol i dynnu sylw at rai o'r materion yng nghefn gwlad, ac i ddisgrifio'r math o dlodi yr ydym yn ei weld a'i effaith ar blant sy'n byw yng nghefn gwlad? Vivienne a Shôn, os oes gennych chi sylwadau yr hoffech eu gwneud yn ysgrifenedig, ar ôl y cyfarfod hwn, buasem yn gwerthfawrogi clywed gennych chi hefyd. Vivienne, a oes gennych chi unrhyw beth i'w ychwanegu at y drafodaeth?

[64] **Ms Laing:** No.

[65] **Brynle Williams:** Hoffwn barhau â hyn, sef yr union beth y mae Alun Ffred wedi bod yn ceisio cyrraedd ato. Mae'n drist nad ydym wedi derbyn bod tlodi yng nghefn gwlad, i raddau. Nid ydyw wedi hynny wedi cael ei wneud yn gyhoeddus, ond mae'n sicr yn bodoli. Yr oeddech yn dweud, Shôn, efallai bod angen prosiectau gwahanol i helpu pobl cefn gwlad. Mae'n sicr bod addysg yn faes pwysig. Mae angen inni geisio cael pobl ifanc, wedi iddynt adael yr ysgol uwchradd, i fynd ymlaen i'r coleg. Mae angen dwyn perswâd arnynt i fynd o un cam i'r nesaf, iddynt dynnu eu hunain allan o dlodi. Sut allwn ni ddatblygu'r agenda honno? Os ydym i dorri'r gadwyn hon, bydd addysg a rhyw fath o hyfforddiant yn bwysig iawn. Nid yw hon yn ffordd allan, ond mae'n ffordd o fynd i'r afael â'r broblem. Beth allwn ei wneud ynghylch hyn?

comment or responding to the committee. However, one thing that I would say is that, generally speaking, it is more expensive to provide services in rural areas and the things that can assist in eradicating the effects of poverty are more costly. We want to see equality of opportunity for children and young people. It is not always a question of allocating funding in a way that fits with the statistics—we also need to assess needs.

Alun Davies: That is what the index is supposed to do. The concern that Alun Ffred has expressed is that the index describes Wales in its entirety and misses the impact of poverty on some rural areas. Could you provide us with a written note on how the commissioner's office views the index and its operation? Is the index adequate to identify some of the problems in rural areas, and to describe the type of poverty that we see and its impact on children in rural areas? Vivienne or Shôn, if you have any comments that you would like to make in writing, after this meeting, we would appreciate hearing from you too. Vivienne, do you have anything to add to this discussion?

Brynle Williams: I would like to continue on this issue, which is exactly what Alun Ffred has been trying to get at. It is sad that we have not accepted that there is rural poverty, to some extent. It has not been made public, but it certainly exists. Shôn, you said that we may need different projects to assist people in rural areas. Education is certainly an important area. We need to try to get young people, once they have left secondary school, to go on to college. It is about encouraging them to take that next step, so that they can pull themselves out of poverty. How can we progress with that agenda? If we are to break this chain, education and some sort of training will be crucial. This is not a way out, but it is a way of addressing the problem. What can we do about this?

[66] **Mr Devey:** Credaf fod angen meddylfryd integredig. O'm mhrofiad i ym Mlaenau Ffestiniog, yr oedd y gwaith yr oeddem yn ei wneud gyda theuluoedd nid yn unig yn waith therapiwtig, i'w gwneud yn rieni gwell ac i gael gwell byd i'r plant, ond yr oedd hefyd yn gysylltiedig â'r economi. Symudodd y rhieni a fynychodd gyrsgiau rhianta ymlaen at addysg, gan mai'r cwrs rhianta oedd y peth cyntaf yr oeddent wedi llwyddo i'w wneud a arweiniodd at dderbyn tystysgrif. Y profiad hwnnw o lwyddo a'u harweiniodd ymlaen i ddysgu gydol oes.

Mr Devey: I think that we need some integrated thinking. From my experience in Blaenau Ffestiniog, the work that we carried out with families was not only therapeutic work, to make them better parents and to improve conditions for children, but it was also linked to the economy. The parents who came on the parenting courses went on to education, because the parenting course was the first thing that they had managed to succeed in for which they were given a certificate. That experience of success led them on to lifelong learning.

[67] O ran yr economi mewn gofal plant, llwyddodd nifer o'r rhieni a ddaeth atom i symud ymlaen, gyda buddsoddiad, i yrfaedd yn y byd gofal plant. Yr oedd hynny, ynddo'i hun, yn darparu gwasanaeth a oedd yn rhyddhau oedolion i fynd ymlaen i hyfforddiant ac i swyddi. I mi, mae'r holl beth—gofalu am y teulu a magu'r plant o fewn y teulu, gofal plant ac addysg—yn creu economi, ac os ydym yn gwneud hynny'n iawn yng nghefn gwlad, yr ydym yn sbarduno economi yng nghefn gwlad. Mae'n bwysig ein bod ni, fel gwasanaethau unigol, yn ceisio edrych ar hyn mewn modd cyfannol. Yr ateb yw cydweithio ac edrych yn gyfannol ar yr economi ac anghenion teuluol.

With regard to the childcare economy, many of the parents who came to us succeeded in moving on, with investment, into childcare. That, in itself, provided a service that allowed adults to go on into training and work. For me, the whole thing—caring for the family and bringing up children within the family, childcare and education—is creating an economy, and if we do that properly in rural areas, we are promoting the rural economy. It is important that we, as individual services, try to look at this in a holistic manner. The solution is to collaborate and to look holistically at the economy and the needs of families.

[68] **Alun Davies:** A oes gennych chi unrhyw beth arall i'w ychwanegu at hynny?

Alun Davies: Do you have anything to add to that?

[69] **Ms Laing:** I just want to add—and I have included this in the paper—that young carers, for example, have particular difficulty in sticking with a plan, because of all of their additional responsibilities. Moving on from that more generally, we must ensure that we focus on the child or young person and ensure that the support and the integrated thinking is there around the needs of that child or young person.

[70] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Yr wyf yn credu mai Sara a ddywedodd ei fod yn ddrutach darparu gwasanaethau mewn ardaloedd gwledig. A oes unrhyw waith wedi'i wneud ar hynny yr ydych yn ymwybodol ohono?

Alun Ffred Jones: I think that it was Sara who said that it was more expensive to provide services in rural areas. Has any work been done on that, that you are aware of?

[71] **Ms Laing:** Yes, there is the research that I highlighted earlier, of which I have a copy; I have sent the link. The research shows that a service in a rural area costs two to three times as much to provide.

[72] **Alun Davies:** If you could allow us to have a copy of that research it would be useful for our inquiry.

[73] **Ms Laing:** I will leave a copy.

[74] **Ms Reid:** Wrth gwrs, mae'n fwy costus i'r unigolyn gyrraedd rhai gwasanaethau, gan gynnwys gwasanaethau statudol, oherwydd teithio a phethau felly. **Ms Reid:** Of course, it is more expensive for individuals to access some services, including statutory services, because of travel and other such issues.

[75] **Mick Bates:** Returning to the point that Alun made earlier about the indices of multiple deprivation, spatial programmes will always target where the biggest number is, so it obviously works against you. However, looking at how that targeting took place—there is a rural Communities First area in the Dyfi valley, and, Shôn, you keep mentioning the work in Blaenau Ffestiniog—how permanent is the work, so that you may see results in reducing poverty in one, two or three years? Is it possible to suggest what type of work gives a permanent result so that poverty does not return? We used to refer to something called the cycle of poverty, which you could break at some points, but, because of other constraints, it returned. From your experience, does it actually permanently get rid of poverty, apart from increasing incomes?

[76] **Mr Devey:** I think that participation is the key, whether it is children and families participating in their solutions or whether it is people in Communities First areas participating in community plans and the development of community initiatives. Once people are engaged, even if that initiative does not go any further, people have been skilled and empowered and have an experience of getting involved and doing something, so those legacies roll on. My experience from developments in Africa and in the middle east is that, where you do not have resources, you engage the human resource, and it is the human resource that continues. So, if we invest in children and families, we have a long-term investment. Children grow up and they become better parents, and the next generation of families are, therefore, better parented. Those are the kinds of long-term legacies, but it is about participative services and participative practice, because, once people are engaged, the effect is magnified so many more times over.

9.50 a.m.

[77] **Mick Bates:** How do you measure that? If you identify participation as a crucial factor in overcoming poverty, how do you measure it so that it can become an index?

[78] **Mr Devey:** I could not tell you how on a giant, strategic level, because I had not really thought about it before I came here. At the local level, we would assess participation—how participative we are being—by talking to families and children and getting them to feed back. We would set participative targets—we want families, this year, to sign up to a service or to be involved in a service. By next year, we would want them involved in looking at and checking their files. By the third year, we would want them engaged in the service and involved in service delivery. Some of the best parenting teachers are parents who have been through the programmes themselves. I know about setting those kinds of targets at the local level to make sure that we are doing it right, but I am not sure about the strategic level.

[79] **Mick Bates:** Strategically, someone mentioned Sure Start. That is a 10-year programme. Does anyone else have anything to offer on that? What, to your mind, would be the one thing that may overcome and break the cycle of poverty? Do you have any suggestions?

[80] **Ms Laing:** An essential part of growing strong, resilient young people is to have a focus on children and young people via universal services, such as schools, as well as ensuring that they have access to additional services, such as drop-in youth facilities and after-school clubs.

[81] **Ms Reid:** I would agree with that.

[82] **Alun Davies:** A oes cwestiwn arall? Diolch am eich cyflwyniadau y bore yma. Mewn datganiad diweddar, amlinellodd y Gweinidog y ffordd y bydd y Llywodraeth yn gweithio i ddileu tlodi plant. Yr ydych wedi dweud nad ydych yn gweld y Llywodraeth yn cyrraedd ei tharged ei hun. A oes gennych sylw i'w wneud am ddatganiad y Gweinidog, a sut byddai hynny'n effeithio ar dlodi yng nghefn gwlad?

Alun Davies: Are there any other questions? Thank you for your presentations this morning. In a recent statement, the Minister outlined how the Government would be working to eradicate child poverty. You have said that you do not see the Government reaching its own target. Do you have any comments to make about the Minister's statement, and how that would affect rural poverty?

[83] **Mr Devey:** Ni hoffwn ddweud heb fod wedi darllen y ddogfen.

Mr Devey: I would not like to say without having read the document.

[84] **Ms Reid:** Ni fyddwn yn gyfforddus yn gwneud sylw yn swyddogol, ar ran y comisiynydd, heb gael y cyfle i ymgynghori ag ef. Yn gyffredinol, ategwn yr hyn a ddywedais ar y dechrau. Mae cymaint o bwyslais ar gynlluniau a mentrau, ac maent yn bwysig iawn, nid yn unig i newid yr ystadegau ond i newid bywydau plant a theuluoedd. Mae angen edrych ar y gwasanaethau mae pob plentyn a phob teulu'n eu derbyn a'r cyfraniad y gallant eu gwneud. Mae'n rhaid edrych ar draws Cymru gyfan. Nid yw'n ddigon i edrych ar fwyafrifoedd yn unig—rhaid edrych ar strategaeth a fydd yn cynnwys pawb, yn enwedig y rhai amddifad neu'r rhai ag amgylchiadau anffafriol oherwydd ffactorau megis anabledd, eu bod yn ofalwyr ifanc, a phroblemau diffyg gwaith.

Ms Reid: I would not be comfortable making any comment officially, on behalf of the commissioner, without first having had an opportunity to consult with him. Generally, I would endorse what I said at the beginning. There is such emphasis on schemes and initiatives, and they are very important, not just to alter the statistics, but to change the lives of children and families. We must look at the services that every child and every family receive, and at the contribution that they can make. We have to take an all-Wales approach. It is not enough to look exclusively at majorities—we have to form a strategy that encompasses all, especially the deprived or those whose circumstances are less favourable due to such factors as disability, having the role of a young carer, and problems of lack of work.

[85] **Alun Davies:** A oes gennych unrhyw beth arall i'w ychwanegu cyn imi ddod â'r sesiwn i ben?

Alun Davies: Do you have anything else to add before I bring the session to a close?

[86] **Ms Laing:** All our organisations are part of the End Child Poverty network. The Minister is working with the network, so it is aware of the three-strand approach. The third strand is working to improve the life chances of children and young people in Wales. What is key is ensuring that, in terms of rural poverty, those initiatives and programmes meet the needs of children and young people in rural areas. As we said, Flying Start, for example, will miss a lot of that dispersed population.

[87] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Gan eich bod wedi gofyn cwestiwn yn benodol ar y datganiad, a chan ein bod yn gwneud ymchwiliad i dlodi, neu amddifadedd, yng nghefn gwlad, efallai y byddai'n briodol i ni ofyn i'r tri chorff wneud sylw ar y datganiad mewn perthynas â'r hyn yr ydym yn ceisio ei wneud. Yr ydym wedi clywed un datganiad

Alun Ffred Jones: As you have asked a question specifically on the statement, and as we are undertaking a review into rural poverty, or deprivation, it may be appropriate for us to ask the three organisations to comment on the statement in relation to what we are trying to achieve. We have heard one statement from Vivienne, but it may be

gan Vivienne, ond efallai y byddai'n ddiddorol cael sylwadau'r ddau gorff arall hefyd.

interesting to hear the comments of the other two organisations too.

[88] **Alun Davies:** Os nad oes unrhyw beth arall i'w ychwanegu, hoffwn ddiolch yn fawr i chi am eich cyflwyniad y bore yma.

Alun Davies: If no-one has anything else to add, I would like to thank you very much for your evidence this morning.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 9.56 a.m. a 10.01 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 9.56 a.m. and 10.01 a.m.*

[89] **Alun Davies:** Hoffwn ddiolch i'r tystion am ddod yma heddiw i gyflwyno eu tystiolaeth. Yr ydym yn gwerthfawrogi'n fawr eu cyfraniad i'r gwaith yr ydym yn ei wneud ar hyn o bryd. Mae'r pwyllgor yn ystyried tlodi yng nghefn gwlad a sut mae hynny'n effeithio ar fywydau pobl. Yr ydym wedi trafod hyn gyda sawl corff, mudiad a sefydliad gwahanol, ac yr ydym eisiau clywed gennych chi hefyd sut y gall dlodi effeithio ar fywydau pobl yng nghefn gwlad.

Alun Davies: I wish to thank the witnesses for coming here today to present their evidence. We greatly appreciate their contribution to the work that we are doing at the moment. The committee is considering poverty in rural Wales and how that affects people's lives. We have discussed this with many different bodies, societies and organisations, and we also want to hear from you, too, how poverty can impact on people's lives in rural Wales.

[90] Gofynnaf i chi gyflwyno eich hunain yn gyntaf ac yna symudwn ymlaen at y cwestiynau. Er bod hon yn sefyllfa eithaf ffurfiol, byddwn yn eithaf anffurfiol o ran gofyn ac ateb y cwestiynau. Os ydych eisiau ychwanegu eich sylwadau ar unrhyw bryd, neidiwch i mewn. Bydd yr aelodau yn gofyn sawl cwestiwn penodol, ond yr wyf yn awyddus i bobl allu datblygu eu pwyntiau. Gofynnaf i chi gyflwyno eich hunain ar gyfer y Cofnod, ac i ddweud ychydig eiriau i gyflwyno eich tystiolaeth.

I ask you to present yourselves first and then we will move on to the questions. Although this is quite a formal situation, we will be quite informal in the way we ask our questions and how you answer them. If you want to add your comments at any point, just jump in. Members will ask several specific questions, but I am keen for people to be able to develop their points. I ask you to introduce yourselves for the Record, and to say a few words in presenting your evidence.

[91] **Ms Akhtar:** My name is Lucy Akhtar, and I am the parenting development officer for Children in Wales. We all know the business case for the increased centralisation of health services. There is a good case as regards saving money and having expertise centred in one place. However, some research was carried out, although not in Wales, to show that this impacts on the health of those people who live the furthest away from those health centres, particularly hospitals. This increased centralisation is also trickling down into family support, with the development of integrated children's centres, for example, and initiatives such as Flying Start. These are excellent initiatives, but they are not necessarily suited to a rural model. Although justified in not wanting to spread the jam too thinly, this concentration of funding means that many disadvantaged families in some rural areas are not getting the service that they need. In some counties, that has created a sort of north-south divide, whereby some parts of a county are getting an awful lot of funding from different streams while others are left with very few services.

[92] Having said that, the small piece of research that I carried out shows that many authorities are doing some good work by using different models of service delivery, such as mobile provision, having smaller family centres located in local authority housing, using community transport, having a telephone service that is more than just a helpline, and having more outreach services. The key message is that it is families, not areas, that suffer

disadvantage, and the costs of providing services in rural areas are not the same as those in urban areas. Their needs are not the same.

[93] **Alun Davies:** Yr oedd eich pwynt olaf yn bwynt a gododd yn ein cyfarfod diwethaf, ac felly byddwn yn dychwelyd at hynny. **Alun Davies:** Your final point was an issue that arose in the last meeting, and so we will return to that.

[94] **Mr O'Neill:** Bore da. My name is Sean O'Neill. I am one of the policy directors at Children in Wales. On behalf of the organisation, I thank you for inviting us to give evidence to this committee today and for taking evidence on rural poverty among children and young people as one of your first lines of inquiry. We are grateful for that.

[95] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Mae'n ddrwg gennyf; efallai nad ydwyf wedi darllen y nodiadau yn iawn, ond beth yn union yw rôl Plant yng Nghymru, a sut mae'n ffitio i mewn i'r patrwm? **Alun Ffred Jones:** I am sorry, as I probably have not read the notes properly, but what exactly is the role of Children in Wales, and how does it fit into the whole scheme of things?

[96] **Mr O'Neill:** Children in Wales is a national umbrella body for organisations working directly with children and young people across Wales. We are a membership body and we have representation from across the voluntary sector, local authorities, health boards, the education sector and schools. We are also part-funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, and our key role is to help to inform and support Government and National Assembly policy, by lobbying and improving practice. We have a range of networks and opportunities for organisations and professionals to come together to share practice and information. We also take those key issues back to Government to lobby on our members' behalf. Is that okay?

[97] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Thank you.

[98] **Mr O'Neill:** In our written response, we have raised a number of issues that have been drawn to our attention over the years. While we recognise that rural poverty is a broad area, we have tried to capture some of the central themes and issues that affect children and young people. To reiterate what we highlighted in our written response, some of the key issues that we found related to access to facilities and services, and not only the financial barriers, but also the physical barriers of living and existing in a rural community. Some of these issues could be a lack of access to recreational, play or sports facilities, but also to health services, such as GPs, and benefits advice services. There is also an issue around access to goods, which can also prove problematic both financially and physically. There is less choice in many areas, with less access to a general store, post office or local supermarket, and transport impacts on all those issues, too.

[99] There is a lack of public transport options in many rural communities, where bus services are infrequent and costly, and such issues are raised routinely with us. Finding opportunities for young people to access employment and higher education have also proved to be challenging in many rural communities, as have opportunities to engage in after-school activities, given that many children rely on school transport to get to and from school. Sustaining friendships is also a big challenge because of access to transport, but also because, where there are large catchment areas for schools, it proves difficult for many children and young people to build friendships outside school hours. The housing and homelessness difficulties around affordability and access to social housing and private rented housing in many rural communities have also been well documented.

[100] However, it is important to note that life is not all bad in rural communities, and there are many positives to be had, and opportunities for young people. Many of the concerns that

we raise, such as the stigma of poverty and income difficulties, are not exclusive to children living in rural areas, particularly the poverty issues, as they also affect children in urban areas. However, they are more acute for some families living in rural communities.

[101] While I think it fair to say that child poverty has raced up the political agenda in the past 10 years or so—and there have been many great initiatives that focus on eradicating child poverty, as we will hear throughout the course of today—it seems as though the issues around the rural poor have sometimes been left behind, and there has been a general thrust to target disadvantaged areas, as opposed to disadvantaged people.

10.10 a.m.

[102] **Ms Bennion:** My name is Rachel Bennion. I am from Funky Dragon, and these are my colleagues, Heather and Kelly. The biggest concerns that we have identified for people living in rural areas are transport, social time, safety and information. There is a lack of buses and the service is unreliable, which means that young people rely on their parents for lifts or have to cycle, which is made difficult because of the shortage of cycle routes, so we would like to see more of these. This lack of transport can also lead to some young people feeling isolated and left out, because they cannot take part in social activities with their friends. Given that access to facilities is restricted by dependence on public transport, there is less for young people to do in their social time.

[103] Many young people worry about their safety when waiting for buses or when cycling, because they feel that motorists consider rural areas to be quieter and therefore increase their speed. We would like to see more lighting and better traffic control in many isolated areas. In the Our Rights, Our Story project, young people said that some of the information that they receive is not as relevant to them as it is to people living in urban areas. Therefore, more effort should be made to educate young people about how relevant these topics are to them, and to create more enthusiasm about such subjects as cultural education.

[104] Although we have identified all of these problems, many young people said that they enjoy living in rural areas and that they know how lucky they are to live in such beautiful places. The main issue is transport, which, if dealt with, could remove many of these feelings of isolation.

[105] **Brynle Williams:** Thank you for coming this morning. We have been given a list of problems that young people in rural communities face. Rachel highlighted the problem that she thinks is the most important. I would like to ask Sean and Lucy whether they agree with that. What do you see as the major problems? We are all well aware of the transport problems. I would like to come back to you afterwards, Rachel, to see what you think could be done to resolve some of these problems. Sean and Lucy, do you have any comments? We have noted the list of problems.

[106] **Mr O'Neill:** We have had a list, but there are overlaps between many of these issues. I concur with Funky Dragon in that a great deal of the evidence that we have provided today has come from children and young people, through professionals working with them. The transport issue has been highlighted, and Rachel has touched upon it already. The lack of transport curtails opportunities in many rural areas, such as for after-school provision, access to education opportunities, and so on. In breaking the cycle of disadvantage, education and employment are important. We are seeing emigration, as people have to leave the places where they were born simply because of the lack of opportunities for them to progress economically. There are also difficulties with the socialisation of children. They are often isolated in these areas, particularly after school, and do not have the opportunity of an evening or at weekends simply to meet up with their friends and do things that many families in urban areas take for granted.

[107] **Ms Akhtar:** The other issue is that some local authorities are finding it hard to justify providing services in rural areas, because of the model of centralisation. A great deal of funding is concentrated in small geographical areas. There is a good case for doing that, but it probably suits the M4 corridor better—the more urban areas. When the population is spread out, local authorities find it hard to justify providing services where there is such a focus on the numbers using the service, and so on. Some of the indicators of deprivation may not be so sensitive to rural deprivation.

[108] **Brynle Williams:** Do you have any suggestions, young lady?

[109] **Ms Bennion:** The best thing to do is to improve the bus service, perhaps by having more regular buses and direct buses that drop off at the cinema or places where young people want to go. Where I live, the buses are not regular. Information from young people shows that buses do not come often enough or go to enough places.

[110] **Brynle Williams:** Thank you very much. Following on from that, is it your opinion that enough is being done to help young people in rural communities?

[111] **Ms Bennion:** I have not seen much being done in rural communities. In more urban areas, things may be improved faster or perhaps better. Starting youth clubs in some rural areas would be a step towards helping those who live in rural areas to socialise more.

[112] **Mick Bates:** Returning to the transport issue, you said that you do not have a regular bus service; many areas have on-demand transport. In other words, you can ring up for the service, rather like a taxi. What sort of service do you think is best: a regular one, or an on-demand service?

[113] **Ms Bennion:** If the service was regular, there would be times when no-one would be using the bus. The on-demand service is a good idea. I have not heard of that before. If that was publicised, so that every young person knew about it, that would be the best idea.

[114] **Mick Bates:** Do you think that young people would use that service?

[115] **Ms Bennion:** Yes. It varies from place to place for young people. More young people would use it if they could access that service; if they had the phones to be able to do that.

[116] **Mick Bates:** When you talk about socialising and going out with your friends, you would be prepared to get on a bus in a rural area and go to the nearest town, for example, where the facilities would be?

[117] **Ms Bennion:** Yes.

[118] **Mick Bates:** You would accept that as a solution?

[119] **Ms Bennion:** Yes, as long as you can access the facilities. If you can get there, then we would see that as a solution to the problem.

[120] **Mick Bates:** Rather than getting your parents to take you somewhere.

[121] **Ms Bennion:** Yes. You have to rely a lot on your parents. They are sometimes not willing to take you everywhere.

[122] **Mick Bates:** They have other things to do, perhaps.

[123] **Ms Bennion:** Yes.

[124] **Mick Bates:** Thank you. That is useful.

[125] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Mae Kelly neu Heather—neu'r ddwy—yn byw yn Amlwch, Ynys Môn. Mae Amlwch yn ardal Cymunedau yn Gyntaf—neu ran ohoni. A yw Cymunedau yn Gyntaf yn cynnig unrhyw brofiadau neu wasanaethau yr ydych yn ei ddefnyddio?

Alun Ffred Jones: Kelly or Heather—or both—live in Amlwch, on Anglesey. Amlwch is a Communities First area—or at least part of it is. Does Communities First offer any experiences or services that you use?

[126] **Ms Folksman:** Yr wyf yn byw wrth ymyl Amlwch. Dim ond dau fws sydd bob dydd. Felly, nid oes cyfle gennym i fynd i leoedd gwahanol heblaw ein bod yn dibynnu ar ein rhieni. Nid oes gwasanaethau eraill.

Ms Folksman: I live near Amlwch. There are only two buses per day. Therefore, we do not have the opportunity to go to different places unless we rely on our parents. There are no other services.

[127] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Yr ydych felly yn byw y tu allan i Amlwch?

Alun Ffred Jones: Therefore, you live outside Amlwch?

[128] **Ms Folksman:** Ydw.

Ms Folksman: Yes.

[129] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Felly, nid yw'n bosibl i chi cael mynediad at unrhyw wasanaeth a gynigir gan Cymunedau'n Gyntaf?

Alun Ffred Jones: So, it is not possible for you to access any services offered by Communities First?

[130] **Ms Folksman:** Nac ydy.

Ms Folksman: No.

[131] **Alun Ffred Jones:** A ydych yn gwybod beth mae Cymunedau'n Gyntaf yn ei wneud?

Alun Ffred Jones: Do you know what Communities First does?

[132] **Ms Folksman:** Nid wyf wedi clywed am unrhyw wasanaethau Cymunedau yn Gyntaf.

Ms Folksman: I have not heard of any Communities First services.

[133] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Ble'r ydych yn byw, Heather?

Alun Ffred Jones: Where do you live, Heather?

[134] **Ms Grierson:** Yr wyf yn byw yn yr un lle, wrth ymyl Amlwch.

Ms Grierson: I live in the same place, near Amlwch.

[135] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Ble yn union wrth ymyl Amlwch?

Alun Ffred Jones: Where exactly near Amlwch?

[136] **Ms Folksman:** Rhosybol.

Ms Folksman: Rhosybol.

[137] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Beth fyddai'n gwella'ch bywyd chi, neu fywyd y bobl sydd yr un oed â chi, yn Rhosybol?

Alun Ffred Jones: What would improve your life, or the lives of those who are the same age as you, in Rhosybol?

[138] **Ms Folksman:** Ffyrdd o deithio i weld ffrindiau heb orfod gofyn i'n rhieni.

Ms Folksman: Means to travel to see our friends without having to ask our parents. We

- Mae'n rhaid gwneud hynny i gyrraedd pob man o le yr wyf yn byw. currently have to do that to get everywhere from where I live.
- [139] **Alun Ffred Jones:** A oes gennych gyfrifiadur adref? **Alun Ffred Jones:** Do you have a computer at home?
- [140] **Ms Folksman:** Oes. **Ms Folksman:** Yes, I do.
- [141] **Alun Ffred Jones:** A chithau? **Alun Ffred Jones:** And you?
- [142] **Ms Grierson:** Oes. **Ms Grierson:** Yes, I do.
- [143] **Alun Ffred Jones:** A ydych yn defnyddio'r rheiny i siarad â'ch ffrindiau gyda'r nos? **Alun Ffred Jones:** Do you use those to speak to your friends in the evenings?
- [144] **Ms Folksman:** Ydw. **Ms Folksman:** Yes, I do.
- [145] **Ms Grierson:** Ydw. **Ms Grierson:** Yes, I do.
- [146] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Faint o amser a ydych yn treulio arnynt gyda'r nos? **Alun Ffred Jones:** How much time to you spend on them in the evenings?
- [147] **Ms Folksman:** Dwy neu dair awr. **Ms Folksman:** Two or three hours.
- [148] **Ms Grierson:** Tair awr. **Ms Grierson:** Three hours.
- [149] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Tair awr? **Alun Ffred Jones:** Three hours?
- [150] **Ms Folksman:** Weithiau. **Ms Folksman:** Sometimes.
- [151] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Felly, yr ydych yn siarad â'ch ffrindiau, ond drwy gyfrwng Facebook, neu rywbeth tebyg. Beth yw'r llall? **Alun Ffred Jones:** Therefore, you speak to your friends, but through the medium of Facebook, or something similar. What is the other one?
- [152] **Ms Grierson:** MSN. **Ms Grierson:** MSN.
- [153] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Wrth gwrs, mae'n ddrwg gennyf. **Alun Ffred Jones:** Of course, I am sorry.
- [154] **Alun Davies:** A oes gennych fand llydan lle yr ydych yn byw? **Alun Davies:** Do you have broadband access where you live?
- [155] **Ms Grierson:** Oes. **Ms Grierson:** Yes.
- [156] **Alun Ffred Jones:** A ddywedwch fod y cyswllt hwnnw drwy MSN yn bwysig i chi? **Alun Ffred Jones:** Would you say that that contact through MSN is important to you?
- [157] **Ms Folksman:** Dyna'n unig gysylltiad gyda'n ffrindiau. **Ms Folksman:** That is the only contact that we have with our friends.
- [158] **Alun Ffred Jones:** Felly, heb fand llydan, ni fyddai hynny yn bosibl? **Alun Ffred Jones:** So, without broadband, that would not be possible?

[159] 10.20 a.m.

[160] **Ms Folksman:** Na fyddai. **Ms Folksman:** No.

[161] **Alun Davies:** On that point, Sean and Rachel, do you have anything to add on the idea of a virtual community beyond the physical geography of where the individual might live?

[162] **Mr O'Neill:** I will pick up on a few points. The difficulty with rural poverty is that it is highly dispersed, so many families are living in what other people might think of as prosperous wards or counties, and there are pockets of deprivation there. So, many young people living in non-Communities First areas cannot access the support and the additional funding that goes into those regions. Sometimes, the statistics can hide the level of deprivation in certain parts of rural Wales.

[163] You also raised the important aspect about IT and computing. We know that there are difficulties in certain parts of Wales in terms of accessing broadband and digital technology, and it is a concern, particularly as many schools set homework which relies on pupils having access to the internet, so there is a disadvantage in that not everyone can access or afford broadband. So, it is a very mixed picture, and it needs to be focused on, particularly if schools rely on pupils being able to access broadband. If you do not have a library or public facilities in your particular village or area, it will be very difficult to do as other people in your class, with access to broadband, can do.

[164] **Ms Akhtar:** If you are being bussed to and from school, you also do not have the same opportunities to stay after school perhaps. Some schools have homework clubs and things such as that, but if you are being bussed to and from school, you may not be able to access that.

[165] **Brynle Williams:** I fynd yn ôl at rywbeth a ddywedodd Rachel, hwyrach fy mod yn dangos fy oed, ond y peth mawr yw rhoi cyfle i bobl ifanc gymdeithasu. Soniodd Rachel am glybiau ieuentid. A oes gennych glybiau ieuentid neu glybiau ffermwyr ifanc yn y pentref yn Sir Fôn? A ydynt yn cynnig gweithgareddau yr ydych am gymryd rhan ynddynt? Pan yr oeddwn yr un oedran â chi—yr wyf wedi bod—yr oeddwn eisiau rhywle i gymdeithasu er mwyn eistedd a siarad efo phobl; nid oeddwn eisiau pregeth. A oes gennych y cyfleusterau hynny yn Sir Fôn? Ni wn o lle yr ydych yn dod, Rachel.

Brynle Williams: Going back to something that Rachel said, perhaps that I am showing my age, but the major issue is to give young people the opportunity to socialise. Rachel talked about youth clubs. Do you have youth clubs or young farmers' clubs in the village in Anglesey? Do they offer activities that you want to take part in? When I was the same age as you—I was once—I wanted somewhere to socialise and sit down to chat with people; I did not want a sermon. Do you have those facilities in Anglesey? I do not know where you are from, Rachel.

[166] **Ms Bennion:** I am from Wrexham.

[167] **Brynle Williams:** Are these facilities in place in Wrexham? Youth clubs seemed to go out of fashion at one time, and went by the wayside in many villages. Are they coming back?

[168] **Ms Bennion:** I live quite far out of Wrexham, so for me to access facilities in Wrexham my mum has to take me to the bus stop and then I must get the bus. So, where I live, there is not a youth club that I can access, but they are in the villages around the area.

[169] **Brynle Williams:** Beth amdanoch chi yn Sir Fôn? A oes clybiau ieuenctid neu glybiau ffermwyr ifanc i chi fedru mynd iddynt i gymdeithasu?

Brynle Williams: What about you in Anglesey? Are there youth clubs or young farmers clubs for you to go to socialise?

[170] **Ms Folksman:** Mae gennym glwb ieuenctid ym Mhensarn, ond mae ein rhieni yn gorfod mynd â ni yno. Mae clwb ieuenctid yn Rhosybol, ond nid yw'n gwneud llawer o bethau gwahanol.

Ms Folksman: We have a youth club in Pensarn, but our parents have to take us there. There is a youth club in Rhosybol, but it does not offer many different activities.

[171] **Brynle Williams:** Yr un hen stori, felly. Diolch yn fawr.

Brynle Williams: It is the same old story, then. Thank you.

[172] **Mick Bates:** I must admit that I found time on the bus to school very useful to do my homework. Moving on from the issues of transport to work issues, much of the evidence seems to suggest that there are not enough job opportunities in rural areas and that the wages are quite low. I would like to hear from Sean and Funky Dragon about those issues and how you see the state of work opportunities at the moment. Are there any improvements that you would like to see in terms of opportunities and wage levels?

[173] **Mr O'Neill:** You have picked up on several key issues in terms of the seasonal work that is available in tourism or agriculture, without trying to generalise, because it is very different across Wales. A great many people are involved in self-employed work in rural areas, and wages and part-time work are a real concern for many people struggling to bring up their children in these areas. It is a difficulty, and some of the challenges are about trying to be flexible in bringing job opportunities to families in the area. So, where there are transport issues, we need to make the link between transport and the job opportunities. If an employer is going into a certain area, they should consider how people will get from A to B to take up those opportunities. In higher education, there are good examples of work by universities and further education colleges in providing outposts in rural areas, in certain villages, and that overcomes the problem of young people having to go to certain towns to access education—the services come to the young people.

[174] One challenge that is not exclusive to rural areas, although it is quite acute there, is the childcare issue. At the moment, there is a big push to get more single parents into work, which we applaud, as long as the jobs are of good quality and there are opportunities to progress. However, the message is coming back to us that there is not a decent level of childcare facilities out there, particularly for families with disabled children, or families who need to access Welsh-language childcare. You also have the issue, if the childminder lives in one place and the parent works in another, that driving the children to the childminder, then driving to work can take up a big chunk of the day, and perhaps the parent will have to leave earlier than his or her colleagues to pick up the children and take them home. Therefore, it can take up a great deal of time, and trying to link that up can be quite stressful.

[175] **Mick Bates:** How widespread is that? Do you have any evidence to suggest that, say, a certain percentage—

[176] **Mr O'Neill:** I do not have the figures in front of me, but it is a message that it reaching us loud and clear—there are challenges around childcare, and it is one of the considerations for families when they think about going into work. There is not a lack of desire to go into work, but there are barriers to be overcome to enable people to do that. It is not simply a case of locating jobs in certain areas—we also need to think about how people will get there, and who will look after the children. There is a lack of nurseries, both state-run and private, in many rural areas. The options are not there to enable people to go back to work

as we would like.

[177] **Mick Bates:** What about wage levels?

[178] **Mr O'Neill:** Again, the message that is coming out is that wages are poor, and there is insecurity in many jobs. That creates difficulties around benefits—if people are in work for several weeks, they lose their entitlement to housing benefit, for example, which is a huge issue. Then there is a delay, with people having no money while they wait, and some people in temporary jobs do not know from one week to another whether they will still be in work. So, it is difficult to plan ahead for your family, and that leads to insecurity and added stress, particularly if you have young children as well.

[179] **Mick Bates:** What about the availability of advice on benefits, for example? Is there good coverage for that advice in rural Wales, and is there a good uptake of benefits?

[180] **Mr O'Neill:** One of the things that the Government is hoping to address at the moment in the financial inclusion strategy is improving the advice services, including debt advice, and income maximisation streams across the whole of Wales. That is an issue for most areas of Wales at the moment. So, yes, you are right to pick up on that point, and one of the developments that Citizens Advice has introduced in England—I am not clear about what is happening in Wales—is mobile advice units, which go out and offer services such as debt advice, and advice on benefits. Just having that point of contact for people who may be isolated is helpful, and links into the wider agenda of increasing benefit levels.

[181] **Ms Akhtar:** Shelter has a pilot in Carmarthenshire, providing advice on debt and homelessness, although I do not have the details right now.

[182] **Mick Bates:** That is interesting. Do either of you have any evidence that there is a lower take-up of benefits in rural areas?

[183] **Ms Akhtar:** There was some research on this by Professor Paul Milbourne of Cardiff University, which showed that take-up was lower in rural areas. However, that research is quite old, so I am not sure about the current situation.

[184] **Mick Bates:** Do you have any comments on wage levels?

10.30 a.m.

[185] **Ms Bennion:** I do not know if the wage levels differ. As I said, there are not that many jobs available unless I could get to Wrexham or Chester to work. So, personally, I do not think there is that much availability of jobs in a rural area as much as in an urban area, but that is an obvious problem.

[186] **Mick Bates:** How many people do you know who travel to Chester to work?

[187] **Ms Bennion:** Some of my friends work in shops there and their parents either take them to Chester or to the bus station. I used to work in Chester, but I had to get a lift into work, so I stopped working there. I know a few people who still do it because they need the money.

[188] **Mick Bates:** Are there any comments from Amlwch?

[189] **Ms Grierson:** There are not many jobs available. We have to travel to Bangor, which is off the island. You either have to get a lift to Bangor or further afield than Bangor, or get the buses, which cost money. So, by the time you have spent the money getting the bus and

because the wages are not very high, you are not getting much.

[190] **Mick Bates:** Transport is a big cost when you are on a low income. What about job prospects? Do you think that you will stay there?

[191] **Ms Grierson:** No.

[192] **Mick Bates:** You will not stay?

[193] **Ms Grierson:** No.

[194] **Mick Bates:** What would you like to do?

[195] **Ms Grierson:** I want to be an architect. I want to live in Cardiff.

[196] **Mick Bates:** All the best with the ambition.

[197] **Alun Ffred Jones:** I will just ask a question of Children in Wales. Your written submission and the additional paper entitled 'Families not areas suffer rural disadvantages' refer to rural deprivation as being dispersed, which is a part of the problem that we have been hearing about all morning. If we take this people-not-the-place approach, as suggested in the report from England, how would that work in practice? You talked about centralisation and the fact that that works against the best interests of rural areas. What can be done to change this? Do you have any practical suggestions?

[198] **Ms Akhtar:** You need to look at what is happening already. Many rural authorities in Wales are doing a lot of good work. This includes, for example, siting family centres in local authority housing, so you do not have one big integrated children's centre but a small family centre in local authority housing, which keeps the costs down. Also, the family centre is sited in an area where people live. The family centre in Carmarthenshire is training people to go out into the wider community—for example, into town halls, community centres and so on—where it holds parents groups. So, there is more outreach work being done. Health visiting is a universal service, and I know that the Family and Parenting Institute in England did a lot of research that showed that the number of health visitors in England was going down. I do not know if the same is true in Wales, but health visitors have come through in this report as a resource that is very much needed in terms of identifying families in need, showing families where they can access services, and providing support for families. Health visitors in rural areas spend a good deal of their time travelling around to see those families.

[199] In Conwy, there is a telephone support line, which is more than just a helpline. It provides planned support over a 12-week period and gives advice over the telephone to families so that they do not have to come to a group. There are many different models out there, and although the Wales Rural Observatory has done a lot of good work looking at, for example, the number of shops, GPs, and so on, no-one is really looking to see systematically what support is provided to families in rural parts of Wales, or looking more systematically than I have done at, for example, the models used by professionals to keep in touch with each other to provide services more effectively in rural areas.

[200] **Alun Ffred Jones:** You referred earlier to costs and the fact that people spend a lot of time travelling to provide services. Have you quantified that in any way? Have you done any work on that?

[201] **Ms Akhtar:** No, but I know that some research was done on the costs in rural parts of England, and it found that more was spent on travel in those areas than in urban areas. I have the figures somewhere among my papers. So, that research has been done in England, but not

in Wales; we have only anecdotal evidence from projects that says that almost more is spent on travel than on actual service delivery.

[202] **Brynle Williams:** The Welsh Assembly Government is now committed to child-poverty proofing, and all policies and strategies must be assessed for their impact upon child poverty. In your evidence, you propose taking a step further in relation to rural areas, and introducing rural-child-poverty proofing. How do you think that would work in practice?

[203] **Mr O'Neill:** The idea of looking at all Government strategies and programmes in terms of their impact upon rural child poverty has been suggested by a number of different sources. At a local level, we need to look at the potential impact upon the rural community, because, as we have already pointed out, lots of people are being missed out from some of these regional programmes. We have anecdotal evidence to suggest that where there is less flexibility around some of the programmes, someone in one street is able to access services that are unavailable to someone just down the road, despite their income levels being similar. The way to overcome that is to try to look at the work of the Assembly Government and consider the impact that it will have on all groups in relation to poverty. It is about not just adults and older people, but children and young people—they need to be looked at independently. We responded to the transport strategy last year, and we were hugely disappointed that all the concerns were around young people getting to and from school—there was no recognition of their needs outside of that context. So, that would be a good place to start—we could look at child-poverty proofing the transport strategy, looking at it from a rural point of view as well.

[204] **Brynle Williams:** So, effectively you are saying that you would like to see rural areas targeted rather than a universal approach being taken.

[205] **Mr O'Neill:** No, it is not about targeting, but taking into account the differences between rural areas and urban areas—rural areas have particular needs. As I said, it is all very well having a number of laudable programmes, but if they are not having the same impact on children in rural areas, and not resulting in the same positive outcomes, then problems are obviously being missed at the outset of programme development. We can hopefully overcome that through rural-poverty proofing and by asking at an early stage, 'How will this impact upon children, young people and families living in rural areas?'. We just need to ask that question, and look for evidence that it will have a positive impact.

[206] **Mick Bates:** We have talked about transport, and you highlighted that as one of the key issues around service delivery. Earlier, we heard that participation is a key way of overcoming many of the problems involved. Do the Funky Dragon representatives think that it helps to take part in the planning of services, for example, in rural Wales?

[207] **Ms Bennion:** Yes, because it means that you can get your point across and explain the problems that you see. If we did not, then the wrong problems could be addressed, or things that were perhaps not relevant or helpful. So, it is important.

[208] **Mick Bates:** Do you feel that your advice and contribution to consultations, for example, on transport, is actually implemented, or is it just a token gesture to talk to young people?

[209] **Ms Bennion:** It is taken into account and listened to, and many of the things that I have been consulted upon have definitely been considered important and been used in finalising the policy.

[210] **Mick Bates:** Sean, do you have anything to add to that? The participation issue seems important, as everyone should be asked for their views. However, more importantly, are those

views valued and acted upon?

10.40 a.m.

[211] **Mr O'Neill:** That is an interesting question. Often, it depends who is doing the consultation, how it is planned and whether the decisions have already been taken in advance of consultation. All the evidence shows us that if you engage with a community, and children and young people in particular, in a meaningful and non-tokenistic way, the outcome should be better for children and young people, so long as the costs are there and you are very open and clear about what is and is not possible and the reasons for that.

[212] **Mick Bates:** Do you have any evidence to show that investment has been made on the basis of consultation with young people, in particular, and that, if they have identified pockets of poverty and related issues, that poverty has been addressed?

[213] **Mr O'Neill:** There is a whole raft of work. When you are consulting with children and young people, many of the issues include children who are not in poverty or disadvantaged. If you are consulting on a leisure centre or a play area, for example, whole groups of children are going to benefit from that. Lots of work has been done on a Government level on looking at the evidence of participation, but it is more about giving young people an opportunity to feed in their issues, which may not have happened if children and young people had not been consulted. One of our expectations with Communities Next is that there will be greater engagement with children and young people. Arguably, in the past, some of the partnerships have done less engaging with children and young people and acting on their issues. So, we hope that this will improve with the Communities Next agenda.

[214] **Ms Akhtar:** There is research that shows that it takes longer to build up relationships with the community and to get to know what the networks are, and that local knowledge is essential. If someone who has been working in a post and who has built up a good network moves on, it can take the person who is starting anew a long time to rebuild the trust and the connections. Therefore, it can take longer to set up new services and consult with a community in rural areas where that is the case.

[215] **Alun Davies:** Before asking whether you have any other points that you wish to make before we come to a conclusion, I would like to return to something that you said, Lucy, in your introduction. You mentioned that it costs more to deliver services in rural areas. Do you have any research to support that point?

[216] **Ms Akhtar:** It depends whether or not I can find it.

[217] **Alun Davies:** We would be happy to have a written note afterwards.

[218] **Ms Akhtar:** It is in the report. Work was done, not in Wales but in England, on the costs of providing services in rural areas compared with those in urban areas. You have your transport costs, but you also have your staff time if staff are going out to see people. That can cost more. For example, Home-Start does a lot of work in Carmarthenshire. It asks volunteers to give up two hours a week to see families, but some of them travel for 45 minutes in order to do that, so there is an additional cost to Home-Start to support that volunteer, and there is also the time taken. I mentioned home visiting before and it is the same with home visitors. If health visitors are going to see families, the time taken has to be added on to the amount of time that they are working. So, there is a cost related to transport and staff time.

[219] **Alun Davies:** We understand what the costs are, but can we in any way account for them? Do we have any way of quantifying what the costs are in real terms?

[220] **Ms Akhtar:** It would be a question of projects or health trusts looking at the unit cost of the travelling time, the cost of the transport, and so on. I think that that is what you mean. However, when people put in a bid for a project or whatever, that is not always fully accounted for.

[221] **Alun Davies:** A oes gennyh—ac yr wyf yn siarad â phob un ohonoch yn awr— unrhyw beth i'w ychwanegu at yr hyn yr ydych wedi ei ddweud y bore yma, cyn i mi ddod â'r sesiwn hon i ben? **Alun Davies:** Do you—I am talking to all of you now—have anything to add to what you have said this morning, before I bring this session to a close?

[222] **Ms Bennion:** No, not particularly.

[223] **Mr O'Neill:** I would just like to mention the free-transport scheme for children and young people living in three counties in Wales, which is a two-year pilot scheme. We feel that that is something that could be taken forward and extended to other areas. We know that there is a commitment in the 'One Wales' agreement to provide free transport for the elderly, but there does not appear to be any way forward in terms of free transport for children and young people to access jobs and employment. While we have talked a great deal about access to transport, it is also about the cost, particularly when it involves getting two or three buses just to go to college, in certain cases. We would like to see that pilot process being speeded up and explored further.

[224] **Alun Davies:** Diolch yn fawr am eich tystiolaeth y bore yma. Yr ydym yn ei gwerthfawrogi yn fawr iawn. Yr wyf am ddod â'r cyfarfod i ben yn awr. Diolch i chi am eich presenoldeb. Bydd ein cyfarfod nesaf ddydd Iau, 13 Mawrth. Diolch yn fawr. **Alun Davies:** Thank you for your evidence this morning; we appreciate it greatly. I will now bring the meeting to a close. Thank you for your attendance. Our next meeting will be on Thursday, 13 March. Thank you.

*Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10.46 a.m.
The meeting ended at 10.46 a.m.*