



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

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

**Dydd Mawrth, 12 Hydref 2010
Tuesday, 12 October 2010**

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cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

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

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Eleanor Burnham	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Helen Mary Jones	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Committee Chair)
Jonathan Morgan	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (yn dirprwyo ar ran Angela Burns) Welsh Conservatives (substitute for Angela Burns)
Lynne Neagle	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Sandy Mewies) Labour (substitute for Sandy Mewies)
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Tony Ivens	Swyddog Datblygu Tadolaeth, Plant yng Nghymru Fatherhood Development Officer, Children in Wales
Lynne Hill	Cyfarwyddwr Polisi, Plant yng Nghymru Policy Director, Children in Wales
Huw Lewis	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (y Dirprwy Weinidog dros Blant) Assembly Member, Labour (the Deputy Minister for Children)
Huw Maguire	Pennaeth y Gangen Cymorth i Deuluoedd, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Head of Family Support Branch, Welsh Assembly Government
Martin Swain	Pennaeth y Gangen Rhaglenni Plant a Theuluoedd, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Head of Children and Families Programmes Branch, Welsh Assembly Government

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

Sarah Bartlett	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Sarah Hatherley	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau Members' Research Service
Abigail Phillips	Clerc Clerk
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.15 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.15 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Helen Mary Jones:** Bore da, **Helen Mary Jones:** Good morning, gyfeillion. Croeso i'r cyfarfod hwn o colleagues. Welcome to this meeting of the Bwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc Cynulliad National Assembly for Wales's Children and Cenedlaethol Cymru. Croesawaf yr Aelodau, Young People Committee. I welcome y tystion a'r cyhoedd i'r cyfarfod. Yr wyf am Members, witnesses and members of the atgoffa pawb bod croeso iddynt gyfrannu yn public to the meeting. I remind everyone that

Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg a bod clustffonau ar gael i glywed y cyfieithu ar y pryd ac i addasu lefel y sain os oes angen. Mae'r cyfieithu ar y pryd ar sianel 1 a gallwch glywed y cyfraniadau yn yr iaith wreiddiol ar sianel 0. Atgoffaf bawb— Aelodau, tystion ac unrhyw un yn y galeri cyhoeddus—y dylent ddiffodd unrhyw 'fwyar duon', galwyr a ffonau symudol. Nid yw'n ddigon da i'w tawelu gan eu bod yn gallu amharu ar yr offer cyfieithu a darlledu. Nid ydym yn disgwyl ymarfer tân felly os yw'r larwm tân yn seinio, bydd y tywyswyr yn dweud wrthym ble i fynd a thrwy ba allanfeydd tân y dylem adael yr adeilad.

they may contribute in English or Welsh and that headsets are available to hear the simultaneous interpretation and to amplify the sound if necessary. The simultaneous interpretation is on channel 1 and you can hear the verbatim feed on channel 0. I remind everyone—Members, witnesses and anyone in the public gallery—that they should switch off any BlackBerrys, pagers or mobile phones. It is not good enough to silence them as they can interfere with the translation and broadcasting equipment. We are not expecting a fire drill this morning, therefore, if the alarm should sound, the ushers will direct us as to which exit we should use to leave the building.

[2] Croesawn Lynne eto, sy'n parhau i eilio dros Sandy ar hyn o bryd, ond a fydd yn dod yn aelod llawn o'r pwyllgor cyn hir. Croesawaf hefyd Jonathan Morgan a fydd yma yn lle Angela Burns ar gyfer gweddill y tymor hwn. Croeso cynnes i ti, Jonathan, a diolch yn fawr iawn i ti.

We welcome Lynne again, who is continuing to substitute for Sandy at the moment, but who will become a full member of the committee soon. I also welcome Jonathan Morgan who will be here instead of Angela Burns for the rest of this term. A warm welcome to you, Jonathan, and thank you very much.

9.16 a.m.

**Camau Dilydol i'r Ymchwiliad i Rianta yng Nghymru a rhoi'r Cynllun
Gweithredu Rhianta ar Waith—Casglu Tystiolaeth
Follow-up on Inquiry into Parenting in Wales and the Delivery of the Parenting
Action Plan—Evidence Gathering**

[3] **Helen Mary Jones:** Croeso cynnes i'r Dirprwy Weinidog, Huw Lewis, a'i swyddogion, Martin Swain a Huw Maguire. Diolch i'r tri ohonoch am ymuno â ni.

Helen Mary Jones: I extend a warm welcome to the Deputy Minister, Huw Lewis, and his officials, Martin Swain and Huw Maguire. Thank you to the three of you for joining us.

[4] I thank the Deputy Minister very much for joining us. He is a regular visitor to the committee, of course. If it is all right with you, Deputy Minister, we will go straight into questions.

[5] The first one will be from me. You state in your written evidence that the Government's policies in relation to parenting have now moved beyond the parenting action plan. Would you explain to us why you felt it was necessary to broaden the approach to family support? What did you feel was not working as well as it should do? How confident are you that the new approach will improve support for parents?

[6] **The Deputy Minister for Children (Huw Lewis):** Thank you, Chair. That is quite a wide-ranging question and I will try to be concise in my answer. The parenting action plan goes back to 2003—it was quite some time ago—and I understand that it was criticised by the Audit Committee at the time for being a little unchallenging in what it set out. What the Welsh Assembly Government and I are moving towards now is a wholly new system, which

we are calling Families First.

[7] The idea of Families First is that, for the first time as far as I am aware, anywhere in Europe, we will attempt to construct a completely holistic support network around each individual family. We will prioritise those families whose children fall within the poverty statistics, but we will also move outwards from there towards families who may have higher end needs and those with less need too. The ambition would be to create a universal family support service that sees children and their parents in the context of a family.

[8] In other words, although interventions that we have out there are doing well and some of them are extremely positive—things like Flying Start, for instance—we do not wish to be intervening in parenting or with particular aspects of what is happening to a child, but we will take the family situation in the round and will be tenacious when taking that family on a journey. Most particularly, of course, my interests would involve a journey out of the child poverty statistics, but we are prepared to knock down any obstacles that lie across the path of those families being able to improve their lives, whatever those obstacles may be. We are as concerned with family finance, for instance, as we might be with a mental health issue that the family might be confronting. It is to be all embracing and all pervasive. It means drawing the entire public sector together with our voluntary sector colleagues, as one—a team around the family—as opposed to referring the family to various services and hoping that those individual interventions will have the desired effect.

9.20 a.m.

[9] **Helen Mary Jones:** I think that we would be quite heartened, Deputy Minister, because one of our concerns in the original report, as you will recall, was that there were bits of work being done in isolation with different families and that there was a lack of a joined-up approach. We also heard, of course, that there were parents who felt that they had benefited enormously from some of the specific parenting work and that their families had benefited enormously. Are you confident that the specific needs of parents for that kind of parenting support will not get lost in this wider overall approach to the family?

[10] **Huw Lewis:** Absolutely. This is crucial and that is why it is very important to begin from where we are. That is why I have asked two local authorities to act as pioneer areas. They are up and running now and we have their indicative plans back on my desk down here in Cardiff—they have just arrived. There is Wrexham in the north, leading a consortium with Denbighshire and Flintshire, and Rhondda Cynon Taf in the south, leading a consortium with Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr, to build on initiatives that they have constructed themselves, in some instances, and, in other instances, things like Flying Start, for which the initial evaluation is showing some very positive outcomes, particularly on parenting. We throw no babies out with any bathwater here, and we build on the more successful interventions that have been constructed across Wales. We allow local teams, as well, to build on their own expertise.

[11] In my travels up and down Wales, I have found that one thing is very clear: there is somewhere, in some part of Wales, somebody who has solved almost any problem. For all the multiple problems faced in building an integrated, holistic, support network around the family, there is a part of Wales somewhere where someone has cracked a part of it. The challenge is to make sure that we bring that together.

[12] The pioneers are what it says on the tin: they will be pioneering by trying to construct that completely integrated support network and we will be learning a great deal from them and not just giving them a lecture on what they should be doing.

[13] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yr oeddwn i'n **Eleanor Burnham:** I thought that that was

meddwl mai dyna oedd Rhoi Cymunedau yn Gyntaf wedi bod yn ceisio ei wneud dros y blynyddoedd, ond mae problemau wedi codi gyda hynny. Yn eich tystiolaeth, yr ydych yn nodi bod mwy o flaenoriaeth yn cael ei rhoi i rianta, ond nid ydych yn cyfeirio yn benodol at argymhellion y pwyllgor i benodi hyrwyddwr rianta. A yw'n deg i ddod i'r casgliad na fydd y Llywodraeth yn gweithredu ar yr argymhelliad hwnnw?

what Communities First had been trying to do over the years, but there have been problems in that regard. In your evidence, you note that greater priority is given to parenting, but you do not refer specifically to the committee's recommendation to appoint a parenting champion. Is it fair to draw the conclusion that the Government will not act upon that recommendation?

[14] **Huw Lewis:** In a word, yes. The approach that I am taking at the moment is that, again, we build on what we already have rather than construct a new structure, if you like, around a parenting champion. It is my intention to build on the effectiveness and the reach, if you like, of the family information service, in particular—which is a statutory requirement, anyway—so that we move towards that fully comprehensive support network that is easily accessible by making sure that the FIS is all that it should be rather than setting up a wholly new system.

[15] **Eleanor Burnham:** May I just interrupt and ask you just to remind people who are listening or watching what the FIS is, please?

[16] **Huw Lewis:** It is the family information service. There is no intention, in my mind, to appoint a parenting champion, as such. If the Chair would allow, I would like to respond to the point on Communities First. There is an important interface here between Families First, which I am talking about here, and how Communities First will develop. Carl Sargeant, the Minister responsible, and I have already had several discussions on making sure that the interlinking, if you like, between family support networks and those wider community interventions, like Communities First—particularly Communities First at its best—do not tread on each other's toes. In fact, they should complement and lean on each other to make sure that the community aspect of the impact upon family life is integrated in that way.

[17] At the other end of the scale, it is also important to think about Gwenda Thomas's work with integrated family support teams and how that will link with Families First and inform it at, perhaps, that higher end of need, so that we have a spectrum. The three of us as Ministers are very concerned that what we have is a system that certainly introduces no barriers to access to support, but is also appropriate to the needs of each particular family. At one end, you might have highly complex needs that may involve drug and alcohol problems and so on, which are of a certain order, and at the other end we might be dealing with issues like housing problems, debt problems or redundancy that may involve a different approach entirely. It is important to get the intervention appropriate and correct.

[18] **Jonathan Morgan:** My questions, Deputy Minister, lead on from the question that Eleanor has just asked. On co-ordination between Government departments, you have said that you are establishing a families working group. Could you give some examples of where co-ordination between Government departments has led to a positive outcome for families and children? I fully accept that there are always challenges in getting Government departments to work together; I know that the Permanent Secretary has been very conscious of that fact when ensuring that the Assembly Government directors general meet on a regular basis and develop a closer working relationship. From your perspective, what has been achieved through better co-ordination that may not have been achieved if those Government departments had not been pooling their efforts? Which Government departments, in your view, have had a better record of working together and which Government departments need a gentle nudge? I am being diplomatic this morning.

[19] **Huw Lewis:** That is all right. I get nervous when Tories use the word ‘nudge’. Forgive me, Jonathan.

[20] Yes, there is a hell of a journey to travel here—let us not be complacent about any of this—and most particularly at local level. I am very concerned about how pioneer areas will illustrate to us how best to co-ordinate departments within a local authority, for instance, let alone outwith the local authority with bodies like the national health service. There is also the issue of how housing bodies might be a part of this. All those bodies that are part of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 are covered by the legislation that nudges them, as Jonathan said, into a legal duty to intervene on this agenda. That is now in force but is barely implemented anywhere you go, so there is a long way to go.

[21] I would draw Members’ attention again to Flying Start and the initial feedback that we are getting on how that has—I have seen this for myself—broken down some longstanding silo mentalities, if you like, for instance between health and other family-based interventions. Health visitors, for instance, being the human face of Flying Start, have pitched in in the most extraordinarily positive way. I was in Barry last week, and I saw some very fine co-working between what traditionally would have been seen as the primary care health team in the area and housing and social services, and all the rest of the Flying Start team. They were working together in one room, as one team. There are examples to be seen and they are inspiring stuff.

9.30 a.m.

[22] However, I would also accept that, generally, wherever you go, there tends to be a piece of the puzzle missing. There was another very good intervention in Blaenau Ffestiniog, where the parenting aspect of things was working well. Work was done with young mothers, in the main, working with Bangor University and the Incredible Years team there. It was fantastic stuff and offered world-standard parenting support, but there was no connection with Jobcentre Plus in respect of their employability and the earning potential for that little family unit in the future, so no-one was discussing with them what their financial prospects were for the future; a piece of the jigsaw was missing.

[23] The whole intention of Families First is that there will be no gaps so that, whatever it is that is preventing a family from moving forward, that is holding them back, we deliver to that family the appropriate form of support without stigma and that people in Wales would get used to the idea that this is the way we treat families in Wales, that this is the way things are done in Welsh communities and that it is just part of the normal way in which we support the raising of our children.

[24] **Helen Mary Jones:** A couple of Members want to ask supplementary questions, and I will call them. However, I am very conscious that we have half an hour with the Deputy Minister; because we invite him here so often, we have to be clear that we can let him go at the time that we have said we will let him go. So, I ask Members to be fairly succinct in their questions and supplementary questions and, as far as we can, in responses. This area of co-ordination is very important, so I will let Members explore that a bit further: Jonathan, first of all, and then Eleanor.

[25] **Jonathan Morgan:** Thank you, Chair, I will be extremely brief. Deputy Minister, I am just trying to get clear in my head what you think the families working group will achieve. You have already used an example of a family where there was no link with Jobcentre Plus. Is that the sort of example where things could be improved by having a families working group?

[26] **Huw Lewis:** Yes. These are early days and I think that the families working group has met once.

[27] **Mr Swain:** It has.

[28] **Huw Lewis:** What we are talking about is getting ourselves sorted out first of all: our health interventions and our health policy, education, social justice, our economic development and so on. Perhaps, on the technicalities, I could hand over to Martin, Chair.

[29] **Mr Swain:** The aim of the group is to integrate at a policy and programme level, so that when we are asking the pioneers to integrate at a local level, they are not seeing above that a tier of administration and a tier of grants management and programme management that makes it complicated for them to deliver. The Deputy Minister has mentioned Communities First; the outcomes under which Communities First operates are very similar in nature to some of the family support programmes that we operate from our department. We have to make them, at that level, more synergistic almost so that, when they are delivering it, they are able to do it more easily. There is also a real importance about linking this agenda to what is coming out through the ERP and some of the work around, for example, youth entrepreneurship, so for lots of work that we are doing to get parents work-ready, if you like, we are linking in far more closely with the departments that are leading on job creation and looking to create employment opportunities.

[30] The whole purpose of the group is to connect at policy level. One of the imperatives is to try to reduce the administrative burden, if you like, that some of the programmes have created and to try to streamline—particularly given the kind of resource pressures that everybody is under—and work with the pioneers then, specifically, to translate that into delivery. Rather than trying to develop a model and then saying to them, ‘Go and implement this’, this is almost a co-production system where we are saying, ‘If we are thinking about integrating at a programme level, how does that translate to delivery level? Will it work?’ That is the aim, to get an interface between the department and our delivery partners.

[31] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is very useful. Thank you very much.

[32] **Eleanor Burnham:** Can you just remind us again what ERP means? There are lots of people listening and they do not have a clue what we are talking about.

[33] **Mr Swain:** It is the economic renewal programme.

[34] **Eleanor Burnham:** Thank you. Brilliant. I have yet to discover, really, how the local service boards fit into the whole scheme of things. Please illuminate how you believe they should, perhaps, be taking a strategic lead in all of this. I was with one of the partners in north-east Wales yesterday and some of them are still a mystery to me, as they are to others.

[35] **Huw Lewis:** Eleanor has put her finger on a particular aspect of where there is a journey to travel. I am hoping very much—and I have discussed this with people on the ground—that particularly Wrexham and Rhondda Cynon Taf as our pioneer areas, will have lessons for us in this regard. The way that Wrexham in particular has made sure that services are delivered at the appropriate level is very interesting indeed, and has lessons for the whole of Wales. The challenge for us is to roll these things out fairly rapidly so that, effectively, by April 2012, I think, we will have this system operating right across the country. However, on local service boards particularly, I do not know. Huw, do you have anything to add on that?

[36] **Mr Maguire:** There are two LSBs that are taking a lead on work around families. I know that there is a project being driven by Gwynedd in partnership with Conwy and Denbighshire, I believe, which is looking at a total place model around families. So, some LSBs are more progressive than others. RCT and Merthyr also are very progressive in looking at joint commissioning, joint planning and, because RCT is one of the pioneer areas, we can

interface with that and learn from that. It is a development in progress, really. It is certainly interesting to see the interface between the LSB, for example, and the three statutory partnerships and, certainly, we want to do some work around that. Denbighshire is doing work around the more integrated approach to partnership planning and partnership delivery and, again, it is one of our pioneer areas, so we are hoping to learn from that. This is meant to be what we are defining as an active learning process. This is not about us thinking what the answer could be; this is about saying what is out there and what works. As the Chair mentioned earlier, there is some good practice in some places; in other places, it is sporadic. We are trying to remove the sporadic nature and make it systematic.

[37] **Huw Lewis:** It might be worth adding, Chair, that this is not a pilot. It is not something we are going to try out for a year or 18 months and then sit back and release a report and all digest it. It is a case of needs must, particularly in light of the budgetary constraints—apart from anything that we will face that will come down the M4 on 20 October and we are all very apprehensive about what that will involve. We need to shift to a wholly new way of working. I have always thought that there is inherent worth in making sure that we shift to a system where the heavy lifting is done by public agencies or professionals in the field, and that we are not expecting families to do the heavy lifting; in other words, the burden of complexity is taken by the professional and not by the family. However, it also concentrates the mind greatly that, unless teams that are working—whether it is a Flying Start team or a Jobcentre Plus team or a local authority social services team working out there in the community—the imperative now is that they must not duplicate; they must work entirely together, they must deliver together and build themselves around the family. Apart from anything else, speaking in budgetary terms, it will be the only way in which we can construct anything sensible and deliver.

[38] **Helen Mary Jones:** I cannot tell you how relieved I am to hear that it is not a pilot.

[39] **Joyce Watson:** Deputy Minister, you are clearly committed to driving this forward, come what may—and I am really pleased and I am sure everybody else is—but the only thing that might get in the way of progress is the sharing of individuals' personal information. To do that, you have to share that information safely, legally and with confidence across services. Can you tell me how you are making progress in that direction?

9.40 a.m.

[40] **Huw Lewis:** This will be a difficult nut to crack, and there are some technicalities here, so I will turn to my colleagues in a second and ask them to shed some further light on this. However, I would say, once again, that there are elements of good practice out there that have grown organically through co-working within local authority areas. I was struck by some extremely simple but commonsense ways forward from the team in Barry, such as getting the primary care side to work with the parenting team, and the social services side to work with housing. It was all very simple. Their filing system was in the same place, which struck me. I thought 'How obvious is this?' but I had not seen it anywhere else. As Joyce says, there is a much more complex aspect to this, particularly our plans for the IT 'architecture', or whatever the jargon is, that we want to build around it.

[41] We have given ourselves a deadline of, I think, April 2012 to get a business case together to make sure that we have the proper IT structure in place to make this deliverable everywhere. There is a multi-agency national stakeholder forum and, apart from anything else, at the senior level, that is trying to track the commitment to make sure that these sorts of things happen. There are huge issues, as some organisations, particularly the larger ones like the NHS, are used to doing things the way they have always done them, as well as to do with how they interact with other teams. Perhaps Martin would like to add a little more.

[42] **Mr Swain:** This is, in effect, a project that sits alongside Families First, but it is integral to it because, in all our work so far, everything comes back to the fact that, unless you share information across organisational boundaries, this will not work. We have mentioned the stakeholder forum. We are running a national project on information sharing or the sharing of personal information. There is good practice in local areas. In Blaenau Gwent, for example, a local information-sharing protocol is in place. We know that, in Torfaen, the Flying Start programme has an approved information-sharing protocol. So, again, it comes back to good practice being quite localised and we want to spread that more.

[43] There is a project, which has a programme board chaired by Emyr Roberts, and it is cross-departmental. So, Emyr chairs it but it is co-chaired by the senior information officer in the health department and it also involves all the other departments within the Welsh Assembly Government. The aim of that is to get a WASPI, which stands for 'Wales accord on sharing personal information'—that was a test. That is the system that we have agreed to adopt. It is also the aim to have local communities of practice that will approve information-sharing protocols on a local basis. So, we want to find good practice and spread that, so that we have a national system of information sharing across organisational boundaries. However, it is an extremely complex area, particularly when you start getting involved with agencies such as the police and some of the health agencies. However, it is under way because Families First will not work without information sharing.

[44] **Helen Mary Jones:** As a committee, we realise how incredibly complex this is, but this has come up as a problem in every piece of work that we have done, ranging from child protection to play provision. Do you have a timescale for this work—not to be completed, as I expect that you will have to keep revisiting it, but to have enough of a protocol in place to make Families First work?

[45] **Mr Swain:** Perhaps we could prepare some advice for the Deputy Minister, and we could write to you to give you the detail on that.

[46] **Helen Mary Jones:** If you would be happy to do that, Huw, we would be very grateful.

[47] **Huw Lewis:** Absolutely.

[48] **Lynne Neagle:** What is the impact of the new integrated family approach on different groups of parents, such as fathers, grandparents, or the parents of children who have disabilities? How will you monitor this and, in particular, how will you monitor spend across departments?

[49] **Huw Lewis:** The real obstacle that we are attempting to overcome here is intervention for the better. There have been really laudable interventions in many cases, but they have been sporadic, episodic and perhaps too specialised. For instance, you can find very fine interventions that look at the parenting or language-in-play aspects of what a family might be up against, but then other aspects, which may really be causing problems for that family, are totally ignored. There might be a terrible housing problem causing the problems, for instance, or you might be dealing with a group of children within that family up to the age of three when there is a teenage sibling you are not dealing with who is in danger of becoming NEET—not in education, employment or training—and that is the real issue at the forefront of the family's mind, the real problem that they are facing.

[50] However, that is not to say that we should not deal with the issues facing single fathers and all fathers, or the multiple and huge range of problems that parents who have disabilities or the parents of children who have disabilities might be facing. The challenge is that there is a single portal for these families to walk through, and the complicated

professional relationships that are working in an area to deliver those more specialised interventions are there but they are worrying about the complexity, and this is all going on inside the box. In other words, when we fire up our computers, very few of us really understand what is going on inside the computer, and what we want is just to make it perform a task. Using that analogy, the family is the computer operator, and the service and information is being delivered to it, but the complexity of all the widgets and so on is all inside.

[51] Dealing with fathers, for instance, the best practice that we see across Wales—and wonderful interventions are going on in localised areas—needs to be universalised throughout Wales through Families First. The pioneer areas particularly lead us in that direction, and we need to deal with the complexity rather than signposting or handing out a leaflet to, say, a single dad in Penrhiwceiber and expecting him to access a service that might be 25 miles away, when he has to rely on public transport to get there, he is trying to hold down a part-time job, and his teenage son is trouble with the police, or whatever. The professionals should do the heavy lifting so that the service is delivered to that single dad.

[52] On monitoring spend, which is an important question, I see that as part of the work with the families working group, which is the cross-departmental body that I mentioned, which is already up and running. As a regular item on its agenda, it monitors the spend across departments, which of itself is a complex issue. The finance behind building Families First is not a simple task. We have to answer questions like what becomes of Flying Start in two to three years' time, or Cymorth, the Communities First outcomes fund, the children and families organisation grant and so on. If we are moving towards true integration, there are questions hanging in the air about how these separate budgets operate together and how cross-departmental financing is streamlined, and I do not have smart answers for those at the moment.

9.50 a.m.

[53] **Helen Mary Jones:** I think that the committee would be particularly anxious, Deputy Minister, that we do not lose sight of parenting support for parents with disabled children. We heard that most conventional programmes were not really suitable for them and that their issues, for example, might be more about letting go and allowing their child to be independent as they reach teenage years, whereas for other parents it might be about how you curb a child's urge for independence. We would be very anxious to make sure that that good practice does not get lost.

[54] We are running a little short of time, but we have time for a few more questions. We will move to your question, Eleanor.

[55] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yn adroddiad 2009, mynegodd y pwyllgor rai pryderon am y stigma sy'n gysylltiedig â rhieni yn gofyn am gymorth—ac yr ydych eisoes wedi cyfeirio at hyn—a chyngor ar fagu plant. Yr ydych wedi penderfynu peidio â gweithredu llinell gymorth genedlaethol ddwyieithog i rieni, ac mae'r wefan yn parhau i fod o dan ystyriaeth. Beth yr ydych wedi'i wneud i helpu rhieni i oresgyn y stigma hwn?

Eleanor Burnham: In the 2009 report, the committee expressed some concerns about the stigma attached to parents asking for assistance—and you have already mentioned this—or advice on raising children. You have decided not to implement a national bilingual helpline for parents, and the website is still under consideration. What have you done to help parents overcome this stigma?

[56] **Huw Lewis:** The issue of stigma is constantly at the forefront of my mind. I am aware of very good working practice across the country, where teams have dealt very well with the issue of stigma in a number of ways. On the helpline, we now have a national contact

number for parents, which routes them through to their local family information service. That is, again, building upon and enhancing the statutory duty of the local family information service; that is the route that I want to travel. How family information services are operating out there is something of a curate's egg.

[57] The issue of stigma, I think, is a little involved for a quick answer here, Eleanor. One thing that strikes me is that we should, perhaps, do away with the term 'parenting'; offering a parenting class is an issue. For instance, the Vale of Glamorgan team has done away with the term 'parenting', which was, in itself, it felt, a step forward.

[58] I am aware of interventions in the United States, for instance, where they talk about things like 'baby college', which is, I think, a cracker. Unfortunately, believe it or not, 'baby college' is copyrighted; that is Americans for you. Perhaps we could do it in Welsh.

[59] **Eleanor Burnham:** But they are not babies for long, are they? That is the problem. *[Laughter.]*

[60] **Huw Lewis:** Yes, of course. The issue of stigma very much has to be taken in parallel with the issue of trust and how a team operates within a community; the two things are connected. As I say, what I would like to see, in a perfect picture, is simply an acceptance within Welsh communities that, when you become a parent, certain things click into place and that it is no more unusual to get support with parenting than it would be to get a visit from a health visitor. I want it to be no more unusual to be assisted with, for instance, language and play than it is to have your red book and go to get your child weighed and measured. This needs to be simply a part of the way in which children are raised in our communities. We should do this by pulling together as a team.

[61] **Eleanor Burnham:** If I may—

[62] **Helen Mary Jones:** Sorry, Eleanor; we have to move on, because we have only got a few minutes left. You can perhaps collar the Deputy Minister later. Jonathan, you have a very specific question about universal support.

[63] **Jonathan Morgan:** In evidence to the committee, Children in Wales points out that there are around 30,000 births in Wales each year and that the money that has been provided by the Welsh Assembly Government for parenting booklets would provide around 5,000 booklets. It is suggesting that there would not be enough booklets for the parents of each child born in Wales. However, you point out in your evidence, at page 4, that the intention is to provide the booklets to parents of a first-born child. Is that the case? Can you confirm that there are enough booklets for the families of first-born children?

[64] **Huw Lewis:** There are various booklets out there and I am sure that I would not be able to recall the names of all of them. There is one on behaviour in the under 10s and 'Help at Hand' is another important booklet. I will hand over to my colleagues, because this is quite a technical question on numbers and availability. I am not trying to dodge your question, but I will make sure that you get a proper numerical answer to what is going on.

[65] I also want to add this: I am beginning to wonder, in the context of the conversations that I have had with service providers and with parents, whether our overreliance on leaflets, posters and booklets is not, of itself, something of a problem. When you consider, for instance, that a third of my constituents have an issue with basic skills, which includes literacy, the idea that you have solved an information problem by handing over a booklet is not necessarily true.

[66] One thing that I have noticed very clearly is that this generation of parents—the

younger generation of parents—gathers information in a very different way. We should, perhaps, be talking to service providers, such as integrated children’s centres, about how they are using things like e-mail, Twitter and Facebook. One thing that I have noticed about every single young parent that I have met is that they have a mobile phone and that they use it; I have not met one that does not. No doubt, there will now be people writing in saying, ‘I would not touch a mobile phone if it was the last thing on earth’. I think that we can use that for keeping parents up to date with what is going on locally. For example, we could make sure that a reminder is sent if there is a child trust fund form to be submitted by a certain date, and that reminders could be sent about next Wednesday’s parenting class and so on. We could ask parents, ‘Did you know that we now have a new possibility for you in speech therapy for your child?’ and so on. News updates could go to people in that way. That might even be a cheaper option than our print runs. There is always a danger, of course, when you do a national print run that, by the time you have done it, some of the information will be out of date.

[67] **Helen Mary Jones:** We heard some interesting evidence about some local voluntary organisations that are already using text messages and things like that to stay in touch with parents who felt that they needed support.

[68] We have time to take your question about measurement, Joyce. We will have to put the rest of the questions in writing to the Deputy Minister, with apologies to Members for not having got through everything, but it was very important to explore those issues about co-ordination and communication earlier on.

[69] **Joyce Watson:** Deputy Minister, you suggest in your paper that a programme of work related to positive parenting will be taken forward under the Families First initiative. What will that entail and how will its success be measured?

10.00 a.m.

[70] **Huw Lewis:** It would entail putting this at the heart of everything that we do. We already have at Bangor University, for instance, the Incredible Years programme team, who are world leaders, and have a reach that goes right across the country with the positive parenting approach that they take. There are others that are being used as well to make sure that as we are resolving the complexity of the problems that are facing families, we are not losing sight of that central cross-party view in this place. A shared Welsh ethos of positive parenting is central to what we do. It has to be there as part of the information that we provide to families through the FIS and other means, it has to be there as part of everything we do in parenting support and interventions, and it has to be there in the minds of professionals. You raised an interesting point about measuring success. How do you measure the success of this? I turn to my colleagues.

[71] **Mr Swain:** I would suggest that we would measure it by the way that we prevent children, young people and their families from escalating up the tiers of need. If we get Families First right, from the top end of the universal provision through the targeted tiers of need, then what we will see is less progression up, with fewer referrals to social services, fewer children getting into the care system, and fewer instances of domestic abuse. There are a number of measures that we would track but, essentially, fewer people getting into that top end of the pyramid would, I suggest, mean that we are succeeding in what we are trying to do.

[72] **Huw Lewis:** I was just about to say that. [*Laughter.*] Incidentally, Flying Start is already resulting in some of what Martin mentioned.

[73] **Mr Swain:** Certainly, there are fewer referrals.

[74] **Huw Lewis:** There have been, for many years, interventions such as On Track in the Rhondda, for instance, which have hit a lot of those targets. However, you have given me pause for thought there, Joyce, on how we might construct this more systematically.

[75] **Joyce Watson:** On measuring it, and you have mentioned some out-turns, would you agree, Deputy Minister, that the key to this would have to be sustaining it in the long term so that we get to a point of measurement? You have said that it is not going to be a pilot scheme, and we are all pleased to hear that, but, equally, it has to roll on long enough for some measurement to be taken. Would you agree?

[76] **Huw Lewis:** Yes. What we are really engaged with here is generational change. I would regard 25 years as a minimum period of measurement, really, although I think that it is very clear that, if you get things right, there are measurable improvements after really quite a short time. Flying Start is, again, the example where you can see that, after just a few years, you can have really quite robust evidence that is pointing to, for instance, school readiness being much improved in children who are engaged in the Flying Start Programme. However, as you say, there are some things that have become inter-generational, that are attitudinal, that are connected to the fortunes of not just the family, but the community in which they are embedded, and so on, which are the work of a generation.

[77] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you very much, Deputy Minister. We have some further questions that we wanted to ask. One was about promoting non-violent forms of discipline, and another was about the potential impact of the financial climate on the work that you are proposing to carry out, although we have touched on that earlier. We would like to submit those to you in writing, if we could. Picking up on some of the points made earlier that, for example, you have changed your focus on the parenting champion and moved on, I am perfectly content with that, but it would be useful if you could look back at those recommendations that you did accept, or accepted in part, and give us a note if you have, as the agenda has moved on, decided not to do that or to do that differently. As you know, we are very keen to track things through when recommendations are accepted. However, we also appreciate that you could have accepted a recommendation but times have moved on and there may be a better way to deliver the outcome that we were looking for. So we will write to you with those questions and perhaps we will also write to the Minister with that request so that we can follow that through.

[78] **Huw Lewis:** Absolutely.

[79] **Helen Mary Jones:** I know there are other Members who want to come in but I am anxious to move on.

[80] Diolch yn fawr iawn i'r Dirprwy Weinidog a diolch i Martin Swain a Huw McGuire. Thank you very much Deputy Minister and thank you Martin Swain and Huw McGuire.

[81] Symudwn ymlaen at ein tystion nesaf. Galwaf gynrychiolwyr Plant yng Nghymru, Lynne Hill a Tony Ivens, at y bwrdd. Diolch yn fawr i chi am ymuno â ni heddiw, ac am y dystiolaeth ysgrifenedig yr ydym wedi'i derbyn eisoes. We move on to our next witnesses. I call the representatives of Children in Wales, Lynne Hill and Tony Ivens, to the table. I thank you for joining us today, and for the written evidence that we have already received.

[82] We will move straight into questions. You may want to make sure that your translation equipment is working and that you know how to use it.

[83] The first question, then, is from me. This is a big question. How successful do you believe that the Welsh Government has been in raising awareness of positive parenting?

[84] **Ms Hill:** I would say that both Children in Wales and the Children are Unbeatable! campaign are probably disappointed that, from our perspective, the commitment that there was, which was very overt, has been less obvious in the last year or so. I think that there is a lot of work going on within parenting programmes, and a lot of emphasis on positive parenting, and I am assuming that we mean non-violent parenting—we mean not smacking, dealing with that aspect. So there is a lot of work that goes on in parenting programmes, but I feel that it is not talked about, it is not raised, and it is not in the public domain.

[85] **Helen Mary Jones:** Do you want to tell us about it?

[86] **Mr Ivens:** Yes, certainly. I think that we need to break it down a little bit to see how families are supported, because where families are in receipt of interventions—that is, the most vulnerable and most complex families—and where there is input from social services and from third sector organisations, I think that the message is getting through. I also think that there is a group of what I could perhaps describe as enlightened parents at the top, who buy into this because they believe in it. However, there is a great group of parents in the middle and they are the parents whom I think we are not getting through to, and that Lynne is referring to in that we need to raise the profile and ensure that that message is getting out there.

[87] **Jonathan Morgan:** Good morning. The Wales Audit Office report stated that, while a number of useful outputs had been produced, there is very limited information on the outcomes achieved as a result of the parenting action plan. From your perspective, what longer term impact has the plan had on the lives of parents, carers, and children in Wales? Has progress been made on the ground and what further action is needed to raise the profile of parenting?

[88] **Mr Ivens:** It is certainly true that those actions in the original plan that were followed through, and which actually happened, have made an impact. I just heard Martin briefly refer to some of the evidence that is starting to come back from Flying Start areas and we know from that evidence that the outcomes for children are definitely better in those areas where those interventions have been made. It almost comes back to the same argument as I have just made: where those services are there on the ground, they are making a difference. I would also suggest to the committee, though, that there are large numbers of families out there whose children would benefit on a whole range of levels from support, and that is not being provided.

[89] **Ms Hill:** Yes. I would agree. Picking up on Tony's point, it is about ensuring that parenting and parenting support is available to every family. The need for support is not an indication of a failing family; every parent is, potentially, a vulnerable parent. I think that there is a gap in that some parents feel that they would like a little bit of support, but it feels like a big step to admit to anybody that, actually, 'This is quite hard work'. Those parents are vulnerable. I have an example from the Vale of Glamorgan, where there was a cohort of new mums. Many of those women had moved into the area with their husbands or partners for work, so their social life and contacts were around work, and they may have moved away from family. When those women had children, suddenly they were quite isolated, possibly in an area where there were very few other people around between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., and so were identified as quite a vulnerable group, although, according to any usual measure of vulnerable parents, they would not have necessarily been flagged up as obviously vulnerable.

10.10 a.m.

[90] The services there did some work to support those mothers, and that was what they needed. Sometimes it is about thinking about the whole of parenting, while not losing the people that are very obviously vulnerable.

[91] **Jonathan Morgan:** One of the areas of support that is alluded to in your paper and, of course, is referred to by the Deputy Minister in his paper, and we discussed this a moment ago, is around the three parenting booklets, and you state that an additional £10,000 was provided and that 5,000 copies of each booklet are being printed. How many children in Wales of those born in each year are the first born in a family? You refer to the fact that 30,000 children are born in each year. A high proportion of those children will be born, presumably, into families in which there is already another child. The Deputy Minister suggests that the booklets are being allocated to those families with a first-born child. Is that happening?

[92] **Mr Ivens:** Not that I am aware of. I do not have any figures on how many of those 30,000 children are first-born children. I simply do not know. May I pick up one thing? The £10,000 produced 5,000 booklets in total, not 5,000 of each of the booklets. I really cannot help you with that question, because I do not know the percentage of births that are first-born children.

[93] **Helen Mary Jones:** We will want to come back to that with the Deputy Minister, I think, and see what he comes back to us with in writing. Joyce has the next question.

[94] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning. The Welsh Government intends to establish a families working group, comprising Government officials, to promote the co-ordination of support for families across Government departments. How important do you think that is in ensuring appropriate support for different groups of parents? You have just alluded to a different group.

[95] **Mr Ivens:** That is absolutely vital, I would say. I do not know whether this is the moment to mention this, but in Jane Hutt's response, as the former Minister, to your original recommendations, she published as, I think, annex 1, the spending on supporting parenting. We had a look at that and we discussed it among the networks. Although I am not for a moment questioning the Minister's figures, it did not include money that was spent by other departments. So money that was spent, for instance, through youth offending teams, and through the youth justice budget, did not appear on that list. We know that a lot of support is provided to families through the health department, and that did not appear on the list. I fully agree with you that it is vital that it happens. However, we do not have that information on how much support is coming from those other departments, which is why our original question was, 'Please can we have some transparency on the figures?'

[96] **Lynne Neagle:** How satisfied are you that Government spending on support for parents is being monitored and managed effectively and efficiently across Government departments and also services at a local and national level?

[97] **Ms Hill:** I would say that we have some concerns around that. I think that that is a reasonable response. One of the concerns that we have, and I think that we reflected it very well in our evidence, is about the lack of co-ordination. If it is not co-ordinated, it is very difficult to know what is happening. So we may be losing the opportunity to gather evidence so that we know about this in full detail. That is one of the concerns that we have. That then makes it very difficult to measure. So, I do not know that we are gathering the data effectively. There are some very good pieces of work, and it is important that we say that, but they are often local pieces of work that are not shared, or if they are shared, they are shared in a very ad-hoc way so that people do not get the opportunity to learn from what is often very good. It may well have been established and evaluated and we just do not share it. So we lose

opportunities and that is such a shame, particularly at a time when we will all be even more focused on resources than we already are. We need to build on what is good, as well as to make sure that we gather all that data.

[98] **Mr Ivens:** If I could just add to that, one of the main arguments originally for an overarching strategy is the fact that we know that each of the 22 areas is producing their own parenting strategy. In some local authority areas, that strategy already exists, while in others authorities are currently in the process of producing a strategy. How that provides integrated thinking, manages to capture the best practice that Lynne has just alluded to, and how that all joins together, is the issue. I do not think that we have that mechanism, because we do not have an overarching strategy and a lead from the Welsh Assembly Government to make that happen.

[99] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yn eich tystiolaeth ysgrifenedig, yr ydych yn mynegu eich siom nad oes camau gweithredu wedi'u cymryd i ddatblygu'r syniad o gael hyrwyddwr rhianta. O ystyried dull integredig newydd Llywodraeth Cymru o gynnig cymorth i deuluoedd, a ydych o'r farn bod achos o hyd dros gael hyrwyddwr rhianta, neu a ddylem, i feddwl am gam syml, fynd yn ôl at gael ymwelwr iechyd i ymweld â phob teulu ac i gefnogi a gwarchod teuluoedd ar draws Cymru, rhai ohonynt yr ydych wedi cyfeirio atynt funud yn ôl nad ydynt yn ymddangos yn ddifreintiedig, ond sy'n byw mewn lleoedd lle nad oes neb o gwmpas yn ystod y dydd, er enghraifft?

Eleanor Burnham: In your written evidence, you express your disappointment that steps have not been taken to develop the idea of having a parenting champion. Given the Welsh Government's new integrated approach to families, are you of the view that there is still a case for having a parenting champion, or should we, to think of a simple step, go back to having a health visitor visit every family and support and protect families across Wales, some of which you have referred to a minute or so ago that do not appear to be deprived, but who live in areas where there is no-one around during the day, for example?

[100] **Mr Ivens:** There was considerable debate, certainly among our members and the networks, about quite what a parenting champion would mean. A number of models were suggested as to how that might work. I do not think that anybody ever came to a firm conclusion, simply because it did not happen.

[101] On the contribution that somebody would make in that role and the importance that it could have, I think that you are right, because it would act as a focus and more. To give you another example, many years ago when I was working for Acting for Children—then known as NCH—we were involved in delivering something called the living with teenagers programme. Originally developed to apply to parenting orders from youth offending teams, it was deemed to be effective across all families with teenage children. We picked up a lot of families who would not normally be deemed to be in need of support services, some of whom were professional people: policemen, social workers, and a whole range of professionals. The health visitors that you are talking about serve the younger end of the age range; those people are not available once your children hit the teenage years. So somebody who would fill that gap, who families could identify with, and who they would feel was speaking on their behalf, would be how we would see a champion, and we would be keen to support that.

[102] **Eleanor Burnham:** Not necessarily providing support in a group, but perhaps visiting families, because we discussed earlier with the Deputy Minister the stigma, sometimes, that people feel when they are in groups that are specifically to—

[103] **Helen Mary Jones:** I can see that you are responding positively to that, Lynne, so I will not ask you to respond formally. Joyce is next.

[104] **Joyce Watson:** You raised concerns in your evidence about the Welsh Government's integrated family teams approach. Can you tell us more about your concerns, specifically why you think that this approach might not address the needs of parents?

[105] **Mr Ivens:** I go back to my last answer, in a way. We are not, for a moment, denying the importance of it to the most complex and most vulnerable families. What we are suggesting is that child poverty is not necessarily synonymous with good or bad parenting and that there is a whole range of universal services out there that needs to be supported. We need to acknowledge the role that a whole range of services provide to parents, which are not necessarily captured. We are not critical of Families First for a moment. We are just wondering where the voice of the child is heard in that initiative.

[106] **Helen Mary Jones:** Do you think, then, that the Welsh Government should publish a new parenting strategy for Wales and a refreshed action plan? If you do believe that, what would you want to see that achieve?

[107] **Mr Ivens:** I think that the answer to your first question is an unequivocal 'yes'. I think that it would support the notion that Families First is about—as Lynne has talked about and which is something about which we constantly hear from our members—how the whole thing is integrated, how all the different strands are pulled together, how we capture best practice, and how we avoid independent local authorities going their own way and ploughing their own furrow with this work. We feel that a good parenting strategy would overcome those difficulties.

[108] It would take that lead and would provide a steer to local authorities with regard to the way in which they will go.

10.20 a.m.

[109] Perhaps I can add a little to that. Two years ago, the national occupational standards for working with parents were rolled out in the UK. Now, for a whole variety of reasons—and I do not think that this is the right time or place to go into those reasons—it did not happen in Wales. We have a new set of revised standards coming out in the new year. Those standards, at practitioner level, have exactly the same role as an overarching parenting strategy would have. They supply the underpinning values and principles for practitioners; and they provide the framework within which they should be working; they stress those areas—for example, you mentioned stigmatisation—that practitioners need to be aware of in order to avoid pitfalls. So, it is almost as if, at practitioner level, we have national occupational standards; we need something that sits at the next level up, which would be an overarching parenting strategy.

[110] **Jonathan Morgan:** I would like to get a better understanding of how support for parents should be made available. You seem to suggest that support for parents ought to be universally available to anyone raising a child, but the Deputy Minister, in his evidence, talks about how you target that support more effectively. Are you saying that every family in Wales ought to be entitled to the same level of support?

[111] **Ms Hill:** No, I do not think that we are saying that. I think that what we are saying is that every parent in Wales should feel comfortable, should not feel concerned about saying to a health visitor, somebody at the GP's surgery, or whoever they come in contact with, 'I am struggling at the moment; I could do with some help'. We know, anecdotally, that the booklets were enough for some people. They got it and they thought that it was really useful. So, no, we are not talking about everybody having a very intensive programme. However, we are talking about everybody having the ability to feel that they can ask for some help and that they will not be branded in the first instance as someone who is obviously struggling. That is

the fear that parents have. There is a fear that they will suddenly become known to social services and that they will be marked in some way.

[112] That is a worry, because then we will only pick up concerns when they are more intense. So it is about every parent having a range of options and that may be booklets or links. We heard the Deputy Minister talk about the use of social media. People do use websites and Twitter and whatever. So, perhaps there could be information that says to any parent that, if they are feeling stressed, they can go along on a Wednesday afternoon, for example. That is what the Flying Start work does. It engages with parents in a very non-judgmental way. It starts with stay and play and baby massage—all of the things that encourage parents to think that it is useful. I do not know that parents think that they are learning, but they feel supported, they feel able to say that, for example, they are struggling with getting their child to bed, and they then get that support. There will still be other families that will need longer term, more in-depth, more intensive support and we are right to focus large resources on those. I fear the worst-case scenario is that we move to a situation where, unless people obviously fail, they do not get support and that is really worrying.

[113] **Jonathan Morgan:** Let us face it, the health of a mum, maybe a dad, but certainly the health of a mum and the child are issues that you will find wherever you are in Wales. It is one thing to ensure that we have enough health visitors, but in targeting support, there are certainly groups of young people—they may be young mums who may be on their own, they could be a young mum, or a dad on their own, certainly, a young mum and a dad who are celebrating the birth of their first child, who face significant challenges. Should we be making the support universal where a family already has two children?

[114] **Mr Ivens:** I would like to make two points. First, what Lynne has said is absolutely correct. However, if we look at it from the other direction, support should be available and accessible according to need. If we come back to those four tiers of need, it may well be that, as Lynne said, something as simple as a booklet could be all that is needed. I think that we are arguing that we cannot focus all our resources on one tier of need. We need to have a balanced provision of services.

[115] Secondly, although we are very well aware of the value of early intervention services, such as Flying Start, I think that it is important not to forget those families who are struggling with older children.

[116] **Lynne Neagle:** I think what you are saying is that there is a difference between universal provision and universal availability. Do you feel that, at the moment, the services that exist out there for, say, parents who might not be having great difficulties with the health visitor provision and so on are offering what is needed to the parents who would not be at the more vulnerable end but still might need the support? Are they being missed at the moment because of the focus on higher need?

[117] **Jonathan Morgan:** My point relates to that because, in your evidence, right at the start, you talked about those parents who can cope well and there are those, perhaps, at the other end of the scale who get a lot of intensive support, but there is a group in the middle that is being missed. I was not quite sure how that was being categorised. That relates to Lynne's point really.

[118] **Ms Hill:** Referring back to the example I gave earlier about 'they', it is about services being open and providers being aware so that they pick up those groups. That group of mums, particularly mums at that point, were supported because somebody identified through various methods that there was a concern, and that was able to happen. So, in answer to your question, Lynne, again in some places there are some very good pieces of work going on but we are not sharing that. We are not able to say that we think that happens absolutely across

Wales. Again, it comes back to that co-ordinating role of what a parenting strategy would do. It would give the message that, in Wales, we value all parents. It would help people to think about all parents and look at where small resources could make a difference to that middle group.

[119] **Helen Mary Jones:** Again, we are running a little bit short of time. We are going to have time for me to call Lynne Neagle to ask her next question and we may need to ask you for a bit of additional written evidence if we feel we have not covered some of the areas that we wanted to touch on.

[120] **Lynne Neagle:** Are there any examples of effective partnerships between schools and parents that are aimed at increasing parental engagement that you might be able to share with us today?

[121] **Mr Ivens:** I think that we need to be careful about what we are talking about here, because I was reading, coming in on the train this morning, the Minister's response to your original recommendations. While I would not want for a moment to negate the importance of parents being involved—for example, standing as a school governor or being involved in a parent teacher association to provide some money for some gym equipment—there is something else going on there with parents and schools.

[122] There is a growing body of evidence, supported by robust academic research, which acknowledges the important role that parents play in their children's education that is outside that formal relationship between school and parent. So, it might be something simple like making sure their child goes to bed at an appropriate time so that they are awake for lessons, or reading with their children. There is this huge body of evidence that says that these children's outcomes are vastly improved when there is that parental involvement. We would like to say that, while, of course, we acknowledge that parents should be represented on school governing bodies—of course we recognise that parents have a role in providing support through PTAs and the like—there must be a much stronger partnership between schools and parents in respect of the parents' contribution to the education of their children, not just to the structure of the school.

[123] **Ms Hill:** I would like to make one quick comment. Again, through the Flying Start work, there are now very good examples. Caerphilly has a transition into school, which helps both the children into school and also begins to encourage parents. Previously, some parents felt that, when they went into the school, they were seven years old again and were being told off again; that is a barrier to overcome. However, there are some examples of work in that area and this is starting at a very early age and would be encouraged through the school.

[124] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you. The clock has beaten us with one substantive question outstanding, which is about the skills, knowledge and understanding required to work with parents. We will look back on your written evidence and the evidence you have given us today, because you have touched on that already. If we feel we need to, if we may, we would like to write to you with any additional questions. I thank you both very much.

10.30 a.m.

Cynnig Trefniadol Procedural Motion

[125] **Helen Mary Jones:** Cynig iaf fod **Helen Mary Jones:** I move that

y pwyllgor yn penderfynu gwahardd y the committee resolves to exclude the public

cyhoedd o weddill y cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog Rhif 10.37(vi). *from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 10.37(vi).*

[126] Gwelaf fod y pwyllgor yn gytûn. I see that the committee is in agreement.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10.30 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 10.30 a.m.