



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

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

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

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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

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 Welsh Conservatives
Lynne Neagle	Llafur (yn dirprwyo ar ran Sandy Mewies) Labour (substitute for Sandy Mewies)
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Naomi Alleyne	Cyfarwyddwr Cydraddoldeb a Chyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru Director of Equalities and Social Justice, Welsh Local Government Association
Dr Tracey Bywater	Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr, Canolfan Blynyddoedd Rhyfeddol Cymru Deputy Director, Incredible Years Wales Centre
Bridget Roberts	Seicolegydd Plant, Bwrdd Iechyd Lleol Prifysgol Betsi Cadwaladr Child Psychologist, Betsi Cadwaladr University Local Health Board
John Sayce	Cyfarwyddwr Cynorthwyol, Barnardo's Cymru Assistant Director, Barnardo's Cymru
Emily Warren	Swyddog Polisi, Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol, Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru Policy Officer, Health and Social Services, Welsh Local Government Association

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 9.19 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.19 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Helen Mary Jones:** Bore da a **Helen Mary Jones:** Good morning and

chroeso, Aelodau, tystion a chyfeillion o'r cyhoedd, i'r cyfarfod hwn o'r Pwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc. Atgoffaf bawb fod croeso ichi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg. Mae clustffonau ar gael i glywed y cyfieithu ar y pryd ar sianel 1, a gellir chwyddleisio'r sain ar gyfer cyfraniadau yn yr iaith wreiddiol ar sianel 0. Gofynnaf i bawb ddiffodd eu ffonau symudol, 'mwyar duon', galwyr ac unrhyw declynnau electronig eraill. Nid yw'n ddigon da eu tawelu gan eu bod yn amharu ar yr offer cyfieithu.

welcome, Members, witnesses and friends from the public, to this meeting of the Children and Young People Committee. I remind you all that you are welcome to contribute in Welsh or English. Headphones are available to hear the simultaneous interpretation on channel 1, and you can increase the volume on the original language on channel 0. I ask you all to switch off your mobile phones, BlackBerrys, pagers and any other electronic device. It is not sufficient to put them on 'silent' as they can interfere with the translation equipment.

[2] Nid ydym yn disgwyl ymarfer tân, felly os oes larwm yn seinio, bydd hynny'n golygu bod problem a bydd y tywyswyr yn dweud wrthym i ble y dylem fynd. Mae Lynne Neagle ac Eleanor Burnham yn bwriadu ymuno â ni yn hwyrach. Nid ydym wedi derbyn unrhyw ymddiheuriadau.

We are not expecting a fire drill, so if an alarm should sound, that will mean that there is a problem and the ushers will tell us where we should go. Lynne Neagle and Eleanor Burnham intend joining us later. We have not received any apologies.

9.20 a.m.

**Ymchwiliad Dilynol i Rianta yng Nghymru a Rhoi'r Cynllun Gweithredu
Rhianta ar Waith: Casglu Tystiolaeth—Barnardo's Cymru
Follow-up on the Inquiry into Parenting in Wales and the Delivery of the
Parenting Action Plan: Evidence Gathering—Barnardo's Cymru**

[3] **Helen Mary Jones:** Croesawn John Sayce o Barnardo's Cymru i roi tystiolaeth i ni ar rianta yng Nghymru.

Helen Mary Jones: I welcome John Sayce from Barnardo's Cymru to present evidence on parenting in Wales.

[4] Thank you very much, John, and a very warm welcome. I am sorry to have delayed you by a minute or two. Thank you very much for the written evidence. If you are happy, we will go straight into questions.

[5] **Mr Sayce:** Please do.

[6] **Helen Mary Jones:** The first one will be from me. The Government's new approach to family support is far broader than the original parenting action plan. Are you satisfied that the Government's new integrated family approach will improve support for parents and that the specific needs for parenting support will not be lost in this broader approach?

[7] **Mr Sayce:** I think that it is helpful to see that you need not just one approach. There are some parents—I think 2 per cent to 3 per cent of parents in Wales—who have very profound and difficult problems, whose children will be in the social care system. For instance, we are now looking at the integrated family support teams for those. They have intergenerational problems; they have substance misuse problems, for example. So, there are those parents with very specific, long-standing problems that I do not think that we have tackled in the past. There is now some good research evidence from the Action for Children work in Dundee on antisocial behaviour and some of the option 2 work, for example, to show that that is a good approach for this section of the population.

[8] However, for the rest of the population, everybody goes through difficulties and we need to start from where the parents are at; all parents have parenting difficulties at some point, including me. There were times when I was bashing my head and wondering, 'What is going on here?', and I think that we need to be responsive to that. There is this group of parents for whom it is important that they do not feel stigmatised when they ask for help. For instance, everyone has a health visitor for the under-fours and most people would not associate any stigma with a health visitor because we have all used them to a lesser or greater extent. However, when children are four or five years of age and go to school, we do not have that approach. In many ways, parents are on their own. Who do you go to? Do you go to your GP? It may be that you could talk to the school teacher or it may be the health visitor again. Who should you go to talk to? We do not have one source of information for parents and that can be quite difficult for them.

[9] You need a two-pronged attack: one for those parents who have extreme difficulties and another so that we can be quite sure that we are offering support to parents before the problems get too big, particularly in relation to children under 11 years of age. That is really important because if you have had problems before your child becomes 11 or 12, you are likely to have continuing problems in the teenage years. All of us who remember what our teenage years were like—mine have gone—will remember that the teenage years can be a very difficult time. Generally, for those people who have problems with their children when they are first teenagers, it tends to be a temporary episode, but for those who had problems before that, which are now continuing through the teenage years, it is likely to be a considerable problem.

[10] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you. Jonathan, would you like to come in?

[11] **Jonathan Morgan:** Chair, before I ask my question, may I ask a supplementary question on the back of that?

[12] **Helen Mary Jones:** Of course, you may.

[13] **Jonathan Morgan:** John, in your evidence you refer to the recommendation of the committee that there should be a national parenting champion. The Deputy Minister, in his evidence on 12 October, confirmed that there is no intention to appoint a parenting champion, as such. The Government is obviously looking at a different way of approaching this. Do you, as an organisation, have a view about that as to what the implications might be of not following that particular recommendation that the committee was so keen on?

[14] **Mr Sayce:** It is a very good recommendation because it says how important parenting is. All the research shows that parenting is extremely important; whether we look at social care, health or education research, it shows that the influence of parents is absolutely crucial.

[15] I will give you one piece of research from the field of education: we know that parental aspirations and values and learning at home are the most important factors in children's attainment. It is not actually about the school. The school is important and lots of other factors are important, but parental input is crucial. If we do not say that we provide some focus for the work for parenting—and parenting is across all those fields—it is going to be lost and it currently has been lost between several different fields. I thought that it was an excellent recommendation.

[16] **Jonathan Morgan:** Do you think that if the Government persists with its reluctance to appoint a national parenting champion, that means that, potentially, Government policy will lack focus?

[17] **Mr Sayce:** I think that it will. It has been very difficult to focus across the different

aspects. Education is going one way, social welfare tends to go its own way and health, as we know, has gone a slightly different way through the national service framework. It is really important that someone draws this together because we know that, for health outcomes, parents are crucial in delivering treatment and ensuring that children go to child and adolescent mental health service appointments, for example. It is absolutely crucial.

[18] **Jonathan Morgan:** Following on from that, the Deputy Minister did state that a family support team within the Government and a families working group had been established to focus on the development of integrated family policy and to raise the profile of parenting. How confident are you that the plans and strategies relating to parenting from education, social care and health fields are being effectively drawn together by the Welsh Assembly Government?

[19] **Mr Sayce:** It is impossible for me to comment on that because I am not aware of the work of that group. One of the useful things when we had the parenting action plan was that we were meeting regularly. We would have six-monthly reviews of where we were getting to. I would say that the first parenting action plan was quite modest, but it was a good start. It tended to focus people's minds and one of the things that came up from that, for instance, was the lack of progress in education. I was a member of the national behaviour and attendance review that reported two years ago. I brought another angle to the work on schools by saying that parenting is really important and that it is important that we work with parents and encourage them to be involved in schools, because many parents have had very poor experiences of schools themselves. For the 10 per cent or 15 per cent of children that we are most worried about, who do very poorly in school, the lack of parental support can be crucial.

[20] **Jonathan Morgan:** When we were asking the Deputy Minister about the co-ordination of services, he told the committee that it means drawing the entire public sector together with our voluntary sector colleagues. What concerns me, from what John has just said, is that they are not aware of the work that has been done by the Welsh Assembly Government to build this family support team and families working group. There does seem to be some sort of disconnect between what the Deputy Minister has said that the Welsh Assembly Government is doing and the voluntary sector's understanding of that.

[21] **Helen Mary Jones:** It sounds as though that might be something that we could pick up in our report.

[22] **Jonathan Morgan:** Yes. Based on your experience, has any progress been made to address problems such as the sharing of personal information on individuals and ensuring that information can be shared safely, legally and with confidence between different organisations in Wales?

[23] **Mr Sayce:** It is a huge and continuing problem. I really thought that we would have cracked this many years ago, but somehow we are still working on it. I am still signing agreements to share information in local authorities while thinking, 'How come we have not cracked this as a nation? Surely we can'. You have lots of local authorities working on this separately. I signed one for a Families First Team Around the Child pilot in Swansea, for example, and then signed an information-sharing agreement with the police and education, while thinking, 'Can we not have a common one and solve this?' Why are all the local authorities trying different things? I think that we could probably do this much more successfully as a nation.

[24] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is a very good point.

[25] **Joyce Watson:** In your written evidence, you state that further work is needed on the children's national service framework standards relating to parenting services. What progress,

in your opinion, has been made to date in implementing the standards and what further action would you like to see?

9.30 a.m.

[26] **Mr Sayce:** I think that it was in about 2005 that the NSF, the national service framework for children, was published. There are some key actions there on parenting education and support. We really welcomed that. I felt that they were looking at it much more broadly than just as health outcomes. There were some actions there for the children and young people's framework partnerships to produce plans. So, there was ready access for parents—I have it here in front of me—to evidence-based information and to programmes designed with the participation of parents. Then there were parenting support programmes and the provision of advice that is consistent, achieved through multi-agency training programmes. That is good. It was not a flagged action, unfortunately; I would have liked it to have been a flagged action to say 'We have to do this', to be a little bit more specific.

[27] Different local authorities are doing different things. I can give an example of one local authority that sees a universal approach as being important, so it offers parenting services particularly for behavioural difficulties, because behavioural difficulties are the No. 1 thing in surveys of parents. It also comes up as No. 1 for teachers—if you read teachers' professional journals, there are always articles about coping with difficult behaviour—and it is a big referral for health as well. So, some would have a universal approach and, on the other side of the border, the next local authority could have a targeted approach.

[28] I ran a parenting project for seven years in Neath Port Talbot, just up the road from the boundary. I vividly remember a woman ringing up and I checked her address, and had to say 'No. 27, you are on the wrong side, you are not in Neath Port Talbot'. I knew that she would not get a service, while Neath Port Talbot had adopted a universal approach and said, 'If you have problems, you can have parenting support'. Interestingly, although it was universal, people said that we would just get the worried well, but in fact only the people with the most problems came forward. You did not get parenting groups full of parents who were really the worried well, with only a few problems; these were the parents with the children with the biggest problems.

[29] So, it is an issue of a differential approach between local authorities. It is difficult, because we want to give power to children and young people's partnerships to decide what the priorities are for their areas, but we need to be more responsive to what parents are saying are the key issues for them.

[30] **Helen Mary Jones:** You may not be able to answer this, John, but what is your perception of the resource implications of that balance between universal and targeted services? One reason that may be given where you have local partnerships going for more targets is that they simply could not afford to offer the service to everybody. However, what you have just said suggests that, in fact, you probably get the same people coming forward as you would for a targeted service, the difference being that it is not stigmatising and that you do not have to go out—

[31] **Mr Sayce:** You do not have to live in a Flying Start area, for instance.

[32] **Helen Mary Jones:** Yes.

[33] **Mr Sayce:** Flying Start has had good evaluations and is quite specific about what it is doing. One of the benefits of Flying Start is that it says, 'This is the provision; we are going to do child care provision and we are going to do parenting'. It is quite specific but, of course, it is a boundary issue. That is the point.

[34] A lot of work has been done to find evidence on parenting and it is one of the interventions that we have best researched. There has also been some work done on cost benefit, and there is definitely a cost benefit; it pays well. We know, for instance, from offending behaviour in adolescents, that continuing offending behaviour has a very high cost. We put in huge resources to a reactive service, rather than a proactive service trying to deal with the problems before they become acute. I think that there is enough evidence to suggest that, if you adopted this universal approach, it is only those with the most difficulties who would come forward. There may be a little bit more research. I am only talking about anecdotal research that was based on something like 200 or 300 families. So, I would be cautious if one person's experience was shared by others.

[35] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is very helpful.

[36] **Joyce Watson:** I will move on to talk about education and involving parents and carers in the education of their child. You say that your Swansea Children Matter project works with parents whose children have school issues. How important is it to involve parents in the education of their children? What action do you think is needed by the Welsh Government to improve parental engagement?

[37] **Mr Sayce:** I think that I touched on that earlier on. There is some very good research by both Desforges and also recent research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation showing that poorer children's educational attainment is strongly associated with parental aspirations and values. We now know that it is not the work that parents do going into school—becoming a member of a PTA or helping with school trips—that is important; the transfer appears to be with what parents do at home. So, family learning would be an excellent example of something that happens at school, but it is the family learning that happens at home that appears to be absolutely crucial to this. As I said, for the 15 to 20 per cent of children who fail, we have parents who have had very poor experiences themselves with school.

[38] A recent survey from Parentline Plus, which is a UK organisation, undertook a national survey—I cannot remember how many hundreds took part—and something like 62 per cent of parents who had issues at school reported that they felt sidelined, patronised or ignored when they were dealing with a school. I am not sure of the basis—I think that it was England and Wales—but I suspect there are common themes there that would apply to Welsh schools.

[39] One thing that we have to look at is trying to move towards parents, because if children do not see their parents and teachers all lining up in the same way, they tend to play one off against the other. We remember doing that as children with our parents; we played one off against the other. If children do not get a consistent message from their parents, school, teachers and headteacher that education is really important, they are not likely to make progress. I think that it is absolutely crucial. We have to think about trying to move particularly to this—I do not know how many we are talking about—10, 15 or 20 per cent of parents who have had some poor experiences. We need to start where they are at.

[40] I have spoken to a lot of parents whose experience of going into school can best be described as frightening. Schools do not deliberately set themselves up that way. They are not deliberately doing it, but it brings back all those memories of having been put in the corner. I know that I am of a generation that has gone, but the only time that I ever saw a headteacher was when I did something wrong, unfortunately. Part of the argument when I was sitting on the national behaviour and attendance review was saying that we need to involve parents much more for them to go to schools to say 'I have problems with behaviour'. Teachers are not trained with behavioural difficulties, parents are not trained with behavioural difficulties, so it is no wonder that kids sometimes play up and have difficulties. Children need to see

parents and schools dealing with behavioural issues in exactly the same way.

[41] **Helen Mary Jones:** I am very conscious that we are a bit pushed for time and these are big issues. I ask Members and you, John, to be as tight as possible. We may find that we do not get through all these questions and we may need to write to you to follow some of them up. I hope that that will be okay.

[42] The next question is from me. The Government's original parenting plan, which you have been cautiously positive about, was criticised by the former Audit Committee for being a bit unchallenging in what it set out to do. Taking this into consideration, what do you believe might be the benefits of a new parenting strategy and action plan for Wales?

[43] **Mr Sayce:** It is quite important that you have specified measurable targets and objectives as to what you are going to do, so that you can plot the strategy, that people can own the strategy or the plan—whatever you like to call it—and that we can review progress and say, 'Have we done this action?', rather than say 'We will make things better for parents in schools'. We need to say what we are going to do. That is crucial, so that everybody can feel confident in taking it forward.

[44] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you. That is really helpful.

[45] **Eleanor Burnham:** In your written evidence, you state that the whole issue of workforce development is one that urgently needs to be addressed. You also state that there have been very few applicants for the new awards under the national occupational standards.

9.40 a.m.

[46] **Helen Mary Jones:** Eleanor, I am sorry to stop you. Are you sure you have the set of questions that relates to this witness?

[47] **Eleanor Burnham:** Forgive me, I was in another committee.

[48] **Helen Mary Jones:** I know you have just come straight from another committee, so you have not had a chance to look over your papers. Bear with us for one second.

[49] **Eleanor Burnham:** I do apologise. Am I looking at the wrong ones?

[50] **Helen Mary Jones:** Shall I bring Jonathan in on question 8, and we will come back to question 7 for you?

[51] **Eleanor Burnham:** No, I am quite okay. How effective are local authorities at promoting and facilitating access for parents to support services, including mentoring or training in parenting skills? I do apologise, chairman.

[52] **Mr Sayce:** Sorry, is this a workforce development question?

[53] **Helen Mary Jones:** No, question on the workforce development was a witness later on.

[54] **Eleanor Burnham:** I do apologise. I will ask the question again. How effective are local authorities at promoting and facilitating access for parents to support services, including mentoring or training in parenting skills?

[55] **Mr Sayce:** I covered some of this slightly earlier on, and said that there has been mixed response. Some local authorities have invested quite heavily, some much less; some

have targeted geographical support, and some have gone for a particular group of parents. The committee would need to think about how you can balance those two.

[56] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you. Jonathan has the next question.

[57] **Jonathan Morgan:** Thank you, Chair. How confident are you that there is sufficient provision of parenting support available to meet the needs of disabled parents or the parents of disabled children?

[58] **Mr Sayce:** There are quite a few organisations now to help parents with disabilities. Certainly, there is Fforwm Magu Plant, the Welsh Parenting Forum. We have not concentrated on this field in particular. My feeling is that there has been some provision, but it is very difficult when you have a child with a disability. They will need continuing support throughout their childhood and the support can vary. So, I would say that there has been some provision. For instance, most social services teams would have a team for children with a disability, so there would be a specific team that was looking after children and families with disabilities.

[59] **Joyce Watson:** You say in your evidence that you provide many services throughout Wales that work with parents with children up to the age of 18. Are you satisfied that there is sufficient provision of parenting support available to meet the needs of men and women involved in parenting across these different age groups?

[60] **Mr Sayce:** I think that it would be the case for all organisations—not just speaking on behalf of Barnardo's, but having heard what Action for Children and other organisations say—that we are still focused on mothers predominantly. All of the evidence from research shows the importance of fathers in parenting and the impact of fathers on their children's attainment levels and on their behaviour, so that is an area that we have to work on.

[61] We have done some work with fathers in prison, for example. They are not prisoners, they are fathers in prison. We tend to talk about them as prisoners who have children. They are not; they are fathers who just happen to be in prison. We know that the research evidence shows there is a very bleak outcome for their children, particularly for boys whose fathers are in prison, and we need to work very closely with them. Then again, some prisons that we work with have parenting programmes and some do not. That cannot be right, because we know that family relationships are the most important factor in ensuring that people stay out of trouble after they come out of prison. The family relationship is more important than education, skills acquisition, and even employment. So, we have a very variable picture of what is on offer. I just use that as an example that might be helpful.

[62] **Helen Mary Jones:** I just have a brief supplementary question, before I call Lynne. The gender issue is obviously very important. One of the other bits of evidence that we took in our original inquiry suggested that there was a need for more support for the parents of teenagers facing difficulties. You said earlier on in your evidence this morning that what happens up to the age of 11 is crucial, so what is your take on that? Is there a need for more targeted support for parents of teenagers, or should the focus still be on the earlier years?

[63] **Mr Sayce:** You have to have a twin-track approach. I have been on the phone with parents screaming down the other end, 'My 14-year-old has gone absolutely berserk. You have to do something about this'. We cannot just turn them away and say, 'Well, I am sorry, you will have to ring the social services and ask them if they can take them into care'. That is not a response that we want to give. We have to respond when people have difficulties.

[64] There is very good evidence to show that parenting programmes work well with teenagers and can change their behaviour. We have many examples of that. Generally, I

would say that the children and young people partnerships do not devote as many resources to the teenage years as they do to the younger years. However, we have to remember the huge investment that we have made. Our youth offending teams are a huge resource for those at the very difficult end, so we are already putting resources in. It is really important that we can respond before they get out of hand, before we say, 'Well, just wait and see' and then somebody brings in their child and dumps them there—as a social worker I have been in situations where people have dumped their teenagers in the duty room and have walked out. My response would be, 'You cannot do this', but they have done it, saying, 'I cannot cope anymore'. If we had intervened six or nine months earlier and offered a programme, they would not have dumped them, or the children would not have committed offences. We know that we need to join these things up. There are antisocial behaviour initiatives through the community safety partnerships. We have to make that join between this and the services that the voluntary sector might offer. That join would be really useful when it comes to teenagers.

[65] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you. We have touched a bit on general support versus targeted support, but, Lynne, I think that you have a question that will enable us to explore that a bit further.

[66] **Lynne Neagle:** Yes. Thanks, Chair. The Government's new integrated families approach is focused primarily on providing support to vulnerable children and families. Given the difficult financial climate that we are in, do you think that it is right to target parenting support at the families with the most complex needs?

[67] **Mr Sayce:** I said earlier that a group of parents that we have to concentrate on were those with the children with the biggest difficulties. The child poverty strategy and the concentration on parents as a route out of poverty are to be welcomed, because many of the parents with the poorest incomes also have the poorest outcomes for their children. However, we know that it is not income based. We know that children of parents with the poorest incomes can attain and do well and it is not a causal relationship. We know that we can help these families.

[68] One way that we can do that is through providing parents with qualifications, because many of the parents that come to our parenting programme do not have qualifications. If you start them with open college network qualifications, for instance, then you can build up, which is why I was talking about the national occupational standards. That is one of the routes out that we should be using and we should see this as an opportunity. It is incredibly heartening to see parents who were users and parents who had difficulties, for instance, becoming volunteers in our projects and then becoming paid staff. When they say, 'You think you have had problems', and then talk about the problems that they have had when they are facilitating courses, it is fantastic. When you see users become volunteers and actual staff members, it is incredibly heartening.

[69] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yn y Gymraeg, **Eleanor Burnham:** In Welsh, please.
os gwelwch yn dda.

[70] **Mr Sayce:** Yn anffodus, nid yw fy Nghymraeg yn dda. **Mr Sayce:** Unfortunately, my Welsh is not good.

[71] **Eleanor Burnham:** Nid yw'n broblem. **Eleanor Burnham:** That is not a problem.

[72] **Helen Mary Jones:** The question will be asked in Welsh, but we are not expecting you to answer it in Welsh, John. Do not panic. [*Laughter.*]

[73] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yes, sorry. I should have said.

[74] Pa gamau y mae angen i Lywodraeth Cymru eu cymryd i sicrhau y caiff adnoddau eu targedu at y rhaglenni rhianta sydd fwyaf effeithiol o ran y modd y maent yn cynnig canlyniadau gwell i blant, a phwy ddylai fod yn gyfrifol am fonitro hyn? Nid oes raid i chi ateb yn Gymraeg.

What steps does the Welsh Government need to take to ensure that resources are targeted at the parenting programmes that are most effective at offering better outcomes for children, and who should be responsible for monitoring that? You do not need to answer in Welsh.

[75] **Mr Sayce:** Diolch yn fawr. The Assembly is to be applauded for its action in wanting to follow evidence-based programmes, but there is a cost to be paid for that research. The Assembly has put huge resources into helping programmes such as Webster-Stratton and Family Links. There are then huge costs afterwards, because these are programmes that Webster-Stratton is putting forward, for instance. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence has done surveys of parenting work with children up to the age of 10 and has made recommendations that say, 'Basically, if you have these eight things in place, you will have a good parenting programme.' One of the key recommendations is to have key facilitators, and another is based on a cognitive behavioural approach.

9.50 a.m.

[76] Given the huge expense required to do this validation, one of the things we have been very strongly advocating, for the forum and ourselves, is standardised measures. All programmes should use standardised measures. So, if you are working on children's behaviour, you should use such and such a measure, so that we can measure across and say, 'Why is it that in Flintshire they can get a much bigger effect than the programme being delivered in Cardiff?' So, if you are working on parental self-esteem, you would use one common outcome. You can use as many measures as you like, but we would say that this or that would be the measure to use to do cross-comparisons. That would be very cheap; I cannot see any cost at all. You choose your one measure that you are going to use. We do it in education; we call them GCSEs, so that we can compare the results for Denbigh with those for Pembrokeshire. We do that with our results for key stages 1 and 2.

[77] **Eleanor Burnham:** I have a supplementary question. Would that include looking at emotional as well as cognitive behaviour or whatever? I was talking to somebody at the weekend as part of my duties, and she wonders whether we should not be looking more at emotional wellbeing.

[78] **Mr Sayce:** We should be looking at emotional wellbeing. If we are going to do that, let us pick a measure to show which is the effective programme. Let us pick a measure so we can say, 'The programme they are using in Powys is much better than the one they are using in Newport' or something, but let us try to measure it. Teaching is much further ahead; they know the approach that works with the teaching of reading and writing. We know that phonics works by having done this cross-comparison.

[79] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yn eich tystiolaeth ysgrifenedig, yr ydych yn nodi bod datblygu'r gweithlu yn faes y mae angen mynd i'r afael ag ef ar fyrder. Yr ydych hefyd yn nodi mai ychydig iawn o ymgeiswyr a gafwyd ar gyfer y dyfarniadau newydd o dan y safonau galwedigaethol cenedlaethol ar gyfer gwaith rhianta. A allwch ddweud rhagor wrthym am eich pryderon penodol?

Eleanor Burnham: In your written evidence, you state that the whole issue of workforce development is one that urgently needs to be addressed. You also state that there have been very few applicants for the new awards under the national occupational standards for parenting work. Can you tell us more about your specific concerns?

[80] **Mr Sayce:** Members will be aware that nearly all occupations have been done by now. I think that there may be one or two occupations that have not been, but everywhere has national occupational standards that set out the standards that that occupation should have and, beneath them, you have awards. For instance, there is a city and guilds award in parenting—I think that that was on offer as a level 2 and level 3 award. The last piece of information I had is about a year old, so I would be slightly cautious. It was that there had been very few successful applicants in Wales for this.

[81] I just gave an example in relation to that, and I know that in Northern Ireland—which I know about through a colleague; a trustee for a national body called Parenting UK, which covers the UK—they had had a big push on this, particularly for staff members who have few qualifications, or who come in unqualified. We in Barnardo's, and many social welfare organisations, are using a lot of unqualified staff who may have good life experiences. It is important that they get qualifications, that they get awards, that they are rewarded and that they are seen to be doing, because that is part of saying not only is the service quality, but the staff are quality, too. Trained facilitators were No. 1 in the NICE inquiry. Trained, proper facilitators in delivering parenting programmes were seen as the key element. So, we should be making sure that we do that by giving the staff volunteers who deliver these programmes access to awards like this.

[82] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you. There is a final question from me, John, which is a bit of a mean one. From this follow-up inquiry, we will be making another report to the Government. If there was one key recommendation that you would like us to make to the Minister, could you identify what it would be? I know that is, as I say, a bit of a mean question, but it might help us to prioritise.

[83] **Mr Sayce:** I would like to go back to some of the evidence that I gave earlier. I think that it is the continuation. Flying Start is to be welcomed, but it is that continuation when they get to school, namely the under-eights, the under-10s, to whatever you like to call them. It is that primary school age group. We should be trying to offer, as we do with health, some sort of universal service so that, if there are problems in teenagers, at least we will have intervened and tried to tackle them before. We have offered it, and it is seen as non-stigmatising. It is okay to come forward and say, 'I don't know what to do with my seven-year-old'. I know that there are cost implications in doing that, but I think that by offering it, as I already outlined, you are only going to get those who have the most problems. Offering it in a non-stigmatising manner, before they reach 10 or 11, is crucial.

[84] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you, John. That is very helpful. Thank you very much indeed for your evidence today and for your written evidence.

[85] **Mr Sayce:** Diolch yn fawr iawn am y cyfle i sôn wrthyhych amdano. **Mr Sayce:** Thank you for the opportunity to tell you about it.

9.55 a.m.

**Ymchwiliad Dilynol i Rianta yng Nghymru a Rhoi'r Cynllun Gweithredu
Rhianta ar Waith: Casglu Tystiolaeth—Canolfan Blynyddoedd Rhyfeddod
Cymru**

**Follow-up on the Inquiry into Parenting in Wales and the Delivery of the
Parenting Action Plan: Evidence Gathering—Incredible Years Wales Centre**

[86] **Helen Mary Jones:** Ar gyfer yr eitem hon, croesawaf Tracey Bywater a Bridget Roberts. Mae Bridget o Fwrdd **Helen Mary Jones:** For this item, I welcome Tracey Bywater and Bridget Roberts. Bridget is from the Betsi Cadwaladr University Local

Iechyd Lleol Prifysgol Betsi Cadwaladr, ac Health Board, and Tracey is from the mae Tracey o Ganolfan Blynyddoedd Incredible Years Wales Centre. Rhyfeddol Cymru.

[87] Mae'r cwestiwn cyntaf i chi, Tracey. The first question is for you, Tracey. Can you A allwch ddweud wrth y pwyllgor beth sydd tell the committee what has been happening wedi bod yn digwydd o ran gwaith with regard to training work under the hyfforddi'r rhaglen Blynyddoedd Rhyfeddol Incredible Years programme and how the a sut y mae'r awdurdodau lleol wedi local authorities have taken up the manteisio ar y cyfle i ymgymryd ag ef? opportunity to engage with that?

[88] **Dr Bywater:** With regard to the training, Judy has compiled a report from April to September, which I believe she has circulated. The target up to April 2011 was to offer approximately 280 training places. So far, from April to September, 120 WAG-funded places have been taken up, so I think that we are going to reach the target come April.

[89] With regard to the spread across the authorities, all 22 Welsh authorities have now taken up training places in all the parent programmes. With regard to the school-based programmes, the teacher classroom management programme is now in 16 authorities and the classroom Dina is in 17 authorities. From the funding that has been offered by WAG over the last few years, I think that you can see there is a really good spread and dissemination of the programmes across the authorities.

[90] In the 2008 survey report that WAG funded us to do, we gave questionnaires out to service managers and to facilitators as well so that we could gauge the delivery of the programmes after the training. We found that 65 per cent of those who had been trained in the parent programme had actually delivered a programme, with 69 per cent across all the authorities looking to deliver in the next year. So, there has been a really good take-up of the programmes.

[91] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you.

[92] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning, both. In the evidence that Incredible Years Wales submitted to the committee in 2009, you highlighted that the Wales Office of Research and Development for Health and Social Care had funded an evaluation of the effectiveness of the parent programme with foster carers and their looked-after children, noting that the Welsh Government had contributed funding to the ongoing evaluation of that toddler programme. Are you able or at the stage now to share with the committee the findings of any recent local evaluations that might have been done to assess the effectiveness of the Incredible Years programme?

[93] **Dr Bywater:** I think that there were two studies that you mentioned there. First, there is the foster carer study—we published that in the last couple of months—into childcare, health and development. We found really good results of the effectiveness of Incredible Years, and that was from the basic 12-week parent programme, not the toddler programme.

10.00 a.m.

[94] There were 46 foster carers involved in that study across three different authorities in north Wales. It was a feasibility study, but quite a rigorous one, meaning that some foster carers went on to the actual programme and some were held back on a waiting list so that we could compare across the two samples. We found that the foster carers who went into the parenting programme had reduced stress levels, so it was helpful for the foster carers on a mental health level. It also improved their parenting competencies and there was a significant reduction in the intensity of problem behaviours for the looked-after children. This also shows

how effective that basic parent programme is. Although it is supposed to be for a younger age group, the age range of the looked-after children was from two up to the age of 17. So, there were some really good results there. We also managed to get some feedback from teachers, and they reflected the reports from the foster carers themselves. The teachers noticed that, in class, the looked-after children were better behaved. So, that was one study.

[95] The other study that you mentioned was the toddler evaluation, for which we now have all our follow-up data in and they have all been databased. We are still looking at the analysis of some of the measures. The schedule of growing skills caused us a bit of extra work; we had to find a way of scoring that particular measure, because the developers of that measure had not taken into account that it was difficult to quantify over time. We found that maternal health has improved over the long term for parents who have been on the toddler programme. There have been reduced levels of critical parenting as well. These are just preliminary analyses. The work is ongoing at the moment, but so far it looks positive.

[96] The only other thing to say about the toddler programme is about the way in which parents were targeted. In programmes such as the Sure Start study that we ran previously, we targeted those supposedly difficult-to-engage parents who had children who were scoring very highly on a behavioural measure. In Flying Start areas, they were just targeted geographically for disadvantage, so we did not gauge the level of need within individual families. A mix of families was recruited to that project. Not only that, we also had the added complication of some of the control families having accessed other Flying Start services, thereby probably diluting some of the effects. We are still looking into how many other services the families accessed, so that we can get to the bottom of that.

[97] **Helen Mary Jones:** I appreciate this is a very complex area, but we have a lot to get through in the next 25 minutes or so. I ask Members and witnesses to be as brief as possible. I know that it is not easy to do and that it is very important to get that data out. One thing about Incredible Years programmes is that statistical data show how they work.

[98] **Eleanor Burnham:** Just for clarification, in case anybody is watching or listening, when you say that there were youngsters scoring highly on the behavioural issue, what you mean is that they were suffering from difficult behaviour, not the other way around. Most people would think that, if you score highly on something, you are doing well.

[99] **Dr Bywater:** Yes, the higher you are, the more difficult the behaviours.

[100] **Eleanor Burnham:** Thank you. That just shows that I was listening carefully.

[101] **Helen Mary Jones:** Of course you were.

[102] **Lynne Neagle:** To what extent does the programme meet the needs of men as parents?

[103] **Dr Bywater:** Most of the studies that we have carried out have been with mothers, because they are usually the primary care takers, but fathers are always invited to the groups. We have fathers who attend quite regularly—there are two or three in almost every group.

[104] **Ms Roberts:** Yes, certainly in the groups that I deliver we usually have two or three fathers in a group of 10 to 12 parents, and we usually manage to keep them on board for the whole programme.

[105] **Dr Bywater:** So, though the primary care taker is usually targeted we always invite the partners of the mother or father along as well.

[106] **Helen Mary Jones:** I have a supplementary question to that. When we were taking evidence for the original inquiry a lot of witnesses told us that they felt that there was a need for programmes that specifically targeted men, because men, as fathers, have potentially different learning styles and would feel comfortable in different environments. Do either of you have a take on that? There was a bit of a perception that some people might characterise Incredible Years as having almost a touchy feely approach—I am not saying that that is what I think—and that it might be an approach that women would find easier to use or get to grips with than men. Do you feel there is a need for specific programmes or might there be a case, for example, for sometimes delivering Incredible Years in a men-only environment, if that makes it easier for fathers to participate?

[107] **Dr Bywater:** I think that partners going together is really valid, because part of the programme tackles relationship problems as well with parents, not just the child. For the foster carer study, they usually came with their partners, because they saw it as a professional role anyway, as more professional training. Do you want to add more about your experience, Bridget?

[108] **Ms Roberts:** If both partners attend the programme, there is at least a consistent approach and the children are receiving the same kind of principles at home, so the programme is more likely to be successful. There is, incidentally, an interesting programme in Blaenau Ffestiniog where a male leader delivers the programme through a kayaking club for fathers and their children, and he incorporates the Incredible Years principles into the kayaking club. That is successful.

[109] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is interesting.

[110] **Eleanor Burnham:** Mae Barnardo's Cymru yn dadlau y dylid cael rhestr wedi'i chymeradwyo o fesurau cyffredin wedi'u safoni y dylai pob rhaglen ei defnyddio er mwyn gallu cymharu rhaglenni rhianta gwahanol i werthuso eu cost-ffeithiolrwydd a nodi unrhyw welliannau a geir o ran ymddygiad plant. A ydych yn cytuno?

Eleanor Burnham: Barnardo's Cymru argues that there should be an approved list of common standardised measures that all programmes should use to allow for comparisons to be made of parenting programmes to evaluate cost-effectiveness and to record any improvements in child behaviour. Do you agree?

[111] **Dr Bywater:** I agree. I think that there should be a common set of standardised measures. Across many of the evaluations that we do we have a core set of measures that we use, and we use the same set in the Pathfinder evaluation in England. Pathfinder also had a national booklet to look at Triple P, Incredible Years and Strengthening Families, and we have the same set of measures. We usually include a maternal health measure, which I think is a very important element of the parenting programmes, and that should also be included in the cost-effectiveness analyses. We carry out cost-effectiveness analyses—we are doing one with the toddler programme and we have also done it with the basic programme. So, I agree that there should be a standard set used for parental mental health, child behaviour and parenting competencies or strategies. It is very difficult when you are doing systematic reviews to draw all the data together and carry out the meta-analyses when people have used different measures and have not all come up with the same method.

10.10 a.m.

[112] **Helen Mary Jones:** Did you want to add anything to that, Ms Roberts?

[113] **Ms Roberts:** No.

[114] **Jonathan Morgan:** How successful do you think the Welsh Government has been in

promoting positive parenting among the general population?

[115] **Dr Bywater:** On positive parenting in the general population, with regard to Incredible Years, I think that, so far, the Government has supported it in many ways. Professor Judy Hutchings offered training throughout Wales and in all authorities. The Government has purchased materials for each authority and supplied each authority with one programme. In addition, the Government has contributed towards the annual Incredible Years conference and newsletter, to aid dissemination to parents, service providers and policy makers.

[116] There has also been an input to the translation of the Incredible Years books for parents, the parent programme and teachers, so that they are now in Welsh and are more accessible to Welsh-speaking parents and teachers. There has been financial support for the evaluation of Incredible Years, of the toddler programme and the survey to look at dissemination. So, with regard to Incredible Years, the Welsh Assembly Government has done quite a lot. There is still a way to go—we have some ideas as to how things could be taken forward—but I think that with regard to Incredible Years there has been a lot of progress.

[117] **Helen Mary Jones:** Do you want to add to that, Ms Roberts?

[118] **Ms Roberts:** No, I agree with that.

[119] **Helen Mary Jones:** The next question is from me and, again, is predominantly to Tracey, but if Bridget wants to add anything, she may. In your evidence in 2009, you stated that three local authorities in Wales had committed to taking forward training for teachers in some of the positive classroom management skills from Incredible Years. How successful has that been? Has it gone beyond those three authorities? To what extent do these programmes dovetail with other initiatives to raise awareness of positive parenting and to involve parents in their children's education?

[120] **Dr Bywater:** With regard to the school-based programmes, we have the teacher classroom management programme and also child-based programmes within the school. Gwynedd, Powys and Anglesey have done incredibly well—especially Gwynedd and Powys—and that comes down a lot to having Bridget and Judy in the Gwynedd/Anglesey area. In Powys, there is Dr Sue Evans, who has a unique role specifically to promote the Incredible Years programmes, parenting and school-based programmes. So, in Gwynedd, the teacher classroom management programme is now in all primary schools, as is classroom Dina for the children. We are also conducting research into the small-group Dina as well. We have funds from the Big Lottery, so we are looking for schools in Gwynedd that already have teacher classroom management and classroom Dina to see if those children who need a little bit of extra help would benefit from being pulled out of class into a small group for two hours a week for 18 weeks. So, we are just under way with that as well. It is all moving forward on the school-base front. With regard to the training of teachers, I know Bangor offers a module of the teacher classroom management programme in its MEd. I think that that helps a lot so that teachers can get some qualifications in relation to the training as well.

[121] **Eleanor Burnham:** Do you mean to tell me that most people who do teacher training do not have access to that kind of module, which is probably one of the most basic issues these days, other than if they do an MEd?

[122] **Dr Bywater:** Yes, I do not think that it is offered in every university. I just know that the MEd in Bangor offers a module.

[123] **Helen Mary Jones:** This is the specific Incredible Years module.

[124] **Eleanor Burnham:** I understand.

[125] **Helen Mary Jones:** All teachers are offered some training in how to manage difficult behaviour. The question is how effective that training is and whether that carries through. This is again an evaluated programme, so we know that those techniques work, whereas the jury is out in relation to some of the other techniques that people are taught.

[126] **Eleanor Burnham:** Thanks, Chair.

[127] **Joyce Watson:** This question is directly to Bridget. Do you agree with Barnardo's Cymru that further work is needed on the children's national service framework standards relating to parenting services? Barnardo's said that it felt that more work was needed. Do you agree? Do you not have an opinion?

[128] **Ms Roberts:** Can you say it again? I am sorry; I did not quite hear you.

[129] **Joyce Watson:** Do you agree with Barnardo's Cymru, whose representative was here earlier, that further work is needed on the children's national service framework standards relating to parenting services?

[130] **Ms Roberts:** Further work of what nature?

[131] **Helen Mary Jones:** It would be to ensure that it is consistently delivered. One of the issues that Barnardo's raised with us is that, of course, some of the actions are not flagged actions, which means that they are optional.

[132] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you, Chair, for your help there; I could have managed.

[133] **Ms Roberts:** On ensuring that it is consistently delivered, the Incredible Years programme does have a formal accreditation process whereby once leaders have delivered the programme two or three times, they can apply to be an accredited leader, which means that they have to submit their tape for review by a mentor or a trainer and they have to show that they are delivering the programme to a specified standard. After that, they can go on to be a mentor and, as a mentor for the parenting programmes—I am a mentor for the north-west Wales region—they can deliver in-house training and supervision. A large part of my role is to do with making sure that the programme is delivered with fidelity to the programme; to make sure that, in fact, it is Incredible Years that is being delivered and not some watered-down version or added-to version.

[134] At the moment, there are only two mentors in Wales: me for north-west Wales and Sue Evans for Powys. Ideally, I think that we should have a mentor for each authority in Wales so we can make sure that the programme is being delivered to its potential and it is Incredible Years that we are delivering. We are all aware of the importance of delivering an evidence-based programme, but we need to make sure that that is happening throughout Wales.

[135] **Eleanor Burnham:** How do we do that?

[136] **Dr Bywater:** At the moment, there are quite a few people trained in Incredible Years who are not yet accredited, so it seems it is a little bit bottom-heavy at the moment. We need to get leaders to go for their accreditation and then, after that process, to do the next step up, which is to become a peer coach, so that they could offer ongoing support and supervision to their colleagues in their local area.

[137] **Eleanor Burnham:** Is this something that we should be recommending, Chair? We know of the Incredible Years. Would that be appropriate?

[138] **Helen Mary Jones:** I think that is certainly something that we should consider when we consider our report. The question is how you achieve the aim of getting people to go on to become mentors because the opportunity is there and there are clearly people who could do it who are not taking it up. There may be things that the Government needs to do to make that happen.

[139] **Lynne Neagle:** My question is to Bridget. How confident are you that the plans and strategies relating to parenting in the social care and health fields are being drawn together effectively by WAG?

[140] **Ms Roberts:** I am very confident that they are being drawn together by WAG, but I would like to reiterate what I just said. We need to make sure that we are delivering Incredible Years and that we are delivering it in the best way possible. The three-day training is just the start of it. There needs to be a lot of supervision and consultation that follows it to make sure that we are delivering it in the best way that we can.

[141] **Jonathan Morgan:** I have a question for both of you. The Assembly Government launched its Families First initiative in July of this year and the concept is to move the strategy beyond the parenting action plan. Do you have any view on the Government's new integrated family approach? Are you satisfied that the specific needs of parents will not be lost in this wider approach to families?

[142] **Dr Bywater:** Could you just give us a little bit more on Families First? I have not managed to—

10.20 a.m.

[143] **Jonathan Morgan:** Well, the Deputy Minister and the Government launched the Families First scheme in July of this year. Are you aware of that?

[144] **Dr Bywater:** I am, yes. Sorry, I am bit nervous at the moment. So, this is to move beyond the parenting plan?

[145] **Jonathan Morgan:** The parenting action plan was published in December 2005. The whole idea was to take it beyond that, partly in response to the work that this committee has done and the recommendations that we have published. The Deputy Minister told us about the Families First programme, which is about co-ordinating Government and trying to get Government departments to work better together. A families group has now been set up in WAG to try to co-ordinate Government policy and get everyone singing from the same hymn sheet, I suppose. It is really about whether what the Government has now announced through Families First, going beyond the parenting action plan, is the right approach in your mind. Does the Families First scheme address the needs of parents or are those needs lost in that wider approach to families?

[146] **Helen Mary Jones:** Some witnesses have suggested to us that they are concerned that the specific needs of parents may get lost. Do you want to give this some more consideration, consult with colleagues and come back to us in writing? Would you feel more comfortable doing that?

[147] **Dr Bywater:** I think so, yes.

[148] **Jonathan Morgan:** There is a reason why we are quite keen on this. I was quite

surprised earlier when we talked to Barnardo's that there seems to be a bit of a disconnect between some people within the voluntary sector and the Government. When we asked John Sayce about how the Government was now looking at providing a more strategic approach to support for parents and families through the setting up of a families working group in the Government and all that sort of thing, he was a bit baffled by all that and did not really seem to know what was going on. It is not a criticism of him, but maybe there is a disconnect at the minute between what the Government is doing and what the understanding is outside of Cathays park. So, if you can come back to us on that, that would be ideal.

[149] **Helen Mary Jones:** It would be interesting to see whether your experience and that of colleagues in the north reflects the concerns that John raised—well, John did not even raise concerns; we picked up concerns in that the Government was talking about very much involving the voluntary sector in this process of bringing everything together across Government, but a very senior representative of one of the biggest voluntary organisations working with children in Wales did not really know what that was all about. So, we will not ask you to answer that today, but if you can give it some thought and would like to come back to us on that, that would be helpful.

[150] The next question builds on Jonathan's question slightly, so, again, you may feel you would like to come back to us. Eleanor will ask it for the record.

[151] **Eleanor Burnham:** Fel y mae'r Cadeirydd wedi nodi, efallai y bydd angen i chi feddwl am hyn a dod yn ôl atom. Sut yr hoffech weld gwaith rhianta'n cael ei ddatblygu gan Lywodraeth Cymru? A ydych o'r farn bod angen i Gymru gael strategaeth rianta genedlaethol, a chynllun gweithredu wedi'i ddiweddarau, yn enwedig gan ichi gyfaddef nad ydych yn gwybod y diweddaraf ynghylch y cynlluniau y buom yn siarad amdanynt?

Eleanor Burnham: As the Chair has noted, perhaps you will need to think about this and come back to us. How would you like to see parenting work developed by the Welsh Government? Do you think that Wales needs to have a national parenting strategy, and an updated action plan, especially since you have admitted that you are not up to date with the schemes that we have been talking about?

[152] **Dr Bywater:** So, this is regarding a parenting strategy, you said, did you not?

[153] **Eleanor Burnham:** Yes, the question is about the Government's parenting strategy and whether it needs to be updated, because, obviously, as we have just been discussing and the Chair has just alluded to with regard to Jonathan's question, some people are not quite in the loop in the way that the Government thinks that they are.

[154] **Dr Bywater:** Yes. The Government has taken the first steps, specifically with Incredible Years, to go out there, see what works, look at the evidence and try to disseminate evidence-based programmes, but the next step is, as we said, to ensure that parents and families continue to be supported by ensuring that the evidence-based programmes that are on offer are delivered properly to get the outcomes, and they are not watered down and that staff continue to have ongoing supervision and reach their accreditation and so on.

[155] **Eleanor Burnham:** Would you want to ensure also that they are available beyond the good work that Bridget is doing in Gwynedd and Powys and so on?

[156] **Dr Bywater:** Yes, exactly. As you can see from the figures, Gwynedd, Anglesey and Powys are leading the field and this is why, because we have mentors and trainers.

[157] **Ms Roberts:** It is largely because we have a mentor in place.

[158] **Eleanor Burnham:** Absolutely, somebody who is very experienced.

[159] **Dr Bywater:** Exactly, so we now need to now push the facilitators through and get them up through the ranks and to ensure that we get the successful results that we have found in our research across the board.

[160] **Helen Mary Jones:** A few times in your evidence you have used the phrase ‘watered down’. I raise this because Incredible Years is very specific about what needs to be delivered and about what skills parents need to be taught and how, and we know from evaluated evidence that it works. So, without wishing to put words into your mouth, do you have a concern about those very specific principles getting watered down or altered or modified, unless people are reminded?

[161] **Ms Roberts:** Yes, I do have a concern about that, because in areas where there is not a mentor people access the three-day training—and we are very specific on how you deliver the programme and the content—but then they go away and deliver it all on their own and there is no mentor around for supervision. It does, inevitably, sometimes get watered down, or added to, or people refer back to past practice.

[162] **Dr Bywater:** Sometimes corners are cut. Sometimes people try to condense the programme down. So, we want to make sure that it does work. We know it works, but it works if you have all the processes in place and the mechanisms in place to support that.

[163] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you. That is very helpful. Thank you both for your evidence today and for your written evidence. If you would like to come back to us on those questions that you thought you needed to reflect on, we would be very grateful.

[164] **Dr Bywater:** We will.

[165] **Helen Mary Jones:** We are not in the business of ambushing anybody on this committee. Well, not unless we think they really deserve it. [*Laughter.*]

[166] **Dr Bywater:** I will leave these information booklets there. Thank you very much.

[167] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you, Bridget and to Tracey.

10.25 a.m.

**Ymchwiliad Dilynol i Dlodi Plant yng Nghymru: Ai Addysg yw'r Ateb?
Follow-up on Inquiry into Child Poverty in Wales: Eradication through
Education**

[168] **Helen Mary Jones:** I am pleased to welcome back to the committee Naomi and Emily from the Welsh Local Government Association. They are regular witnesses to our committee. We are grateful to you both for being here. Thank you very much indeed for your evidence. If you are happy we will move, as we usually do, straight into questions, starting with a question from me.

[169] The Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 requires both local authorities and Welsh Ministers to prepare a strategy for contributing to the eradication of child poverty, with one of its stated aims being to reduce inequalities in educational attainment. What challenges do local authorities face in ensuring that the local strategies and the national strategy are aligned effectively?

[170] **Ms Alleyne:** Good morning to you all. First, I give the apologies of Dr Chris Llewelyn, our director of education and lifelong learning, who cannot be here this morning. He is at the partnership council meeting that is focusing on the education frontline resources review. So he very much gives his apologies. If you have some specific education questions, it is possible, therefore, that we may need to provide written evidence to you following the meeting this morning.

[171] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is fine, of course.

[172] **Ms Alleyne:** In relation to the question that you asked, I can firstly state that local government accepts that the Assembly Government has that role to set the strategy at the national level and local authorities and their partners work at the local level with the Assembly Government to deliver those on its behalf. That is the way that it needs to work and there needs to be a partnership approach, ensuring that there is effective communication and co-production of those strategies so that what is developed at the national level is deliverable at the local level.

[173] A good example of where the interface between the Assembly Government and other local partners has worked well is the development of the child poverty strategy over the past few months and through consultation earlier this year. The Assembly Government engaged very early on with partners at the local level from all sectors—the voluntary sector and local government—to assess what that strategy should look like, what it should entail, what the key objectives would be, and, through the process of development, very much tested out with partners what their thinking was and what their views were. So, that communication and that interface have been very effective. That has meant that the child poverty strategy, when it came out for consultation, was generally very much welcomed, although there were, obviously, comments on it, because there was a great deal of engagement and communication as it was developed.

10.30 a.m.

[174] Basing the national child poverty strategy around the seven core aims, which link into what children and young people's partnerships and partners were doing at the local level around the core aims, also ensured that there was a lot of alignment between the strategy and the work that will follow in the future.

[175] Difficulties and challenges can arise when that communication and co-production, that working together to develop those national policies, does not happen. An example of where we would say that it has been less than perfect—again, looking at the issue of child poverty—was the decision to amend the Cymorth grant earlier this year, which was made by the Assembly Government without consultation or discussion with other partners. That meant that when the decision was communicated, there were many questions and a lot of angst about what that meant in practice, and it has taken quite a few months to get the detail that people wanted. So, the challenge is around communication, and ensuring that there is shared understanding of the issues.

[176] Other challenges arise where there is no alignment. Some of the national strategies do not take account of the importance of local priorities in delivery, because at the local level local councillors are elected on a mandate on issues that they want to take forward. Generally, there is alignment, but when there is a clear disconnect there can be difficulties.

[177] So, there are good examples, and the child poverty strategy is a good example of where some of those challenges have not arisen, because there was early engagement. Communication is a key issue. It is about Government being clear about what is expected, what needs to be delivered at the national level, and what is expected of its partners at the

local level. You have had examples of where it has worked and where it has not worked in practice.

[178] **Eleanor Burnham:** A allwch amlinellu rôl ysgolion a cholegau wrth lunio strategaethau tlodí plant, yn enwedig y rhai lleol? Sut yr ydych yn rhagweld y byddant yn gweithio gyda phartneriaethau plant a phobl ifanc i fodloni gofynion y strategaeth genedlaethol?

Eleanor Burnham: Can you outline the role of schools and colleges in drawing up child poverty strategies, especially local strategies? How do you envisage them working with children and young people's partnerships to fulfil the requirements of the national strategy?

[179] **Ms Alleyne:** It is clear that all educational establishments have a key role to play in ensuring that they can tackle low educational attainment and in tackling child poverty. No one agency, no one school, and no one college can do this on their own, and no local authority can do it on its own; it has to be done in partnerships. The children and young people's partnerships are an effective mechanism for bringing those bodies together at the local level.

[180] One of the challenges to overcome in respect of the engagement of schools and colleges is the logistics involved. There is a whole range of schools and colleges within an area, and how they are represented on a children and young people's partnership, or how they feed into that is a challenge to ensure that those partnerships do not become so unwieldy that they become unworkable, but yet everybody's view is fed in. I think that children and young people's partnerships are acutely aware of the issue, and involve schools and colleges in developing and implementing those policies and ensuring that there is effective communication between them.

[181] In a response on the children and young people's partnerships interim guidance, which was out to consultation earlier this year, we made the point that there needs to be effective communication. We need structures in place that ensure that the priorities of the children and young people's partnerships are informed by the needs of colleges, schools and other educational establishments and that the work that they are taking forward is communicated back as well. It is about ensuring that there is a dual process, if you like, in communication. The planning process will not be effective without involving and engaging schools and colleges. How that happens at the local level will vary according to local circumstances, but there needs to be effective communication so that those priorities are genuinely shared by all key partners at the local level. They might do that by having somebody who represents the schools in the area, but the bottom line is that there is effective communication around that.

[182] **Eleanor Burnham:** Are you happy that there is sufficient communication with the young people themselves? While you would expect young people to be engaged fully, are you finding that happening on the young people's partnerships?

[183] **Ms Alleyne:** There is a whole range of ways in which children and young people are engaged in this work and the priorities, if you like, around the children and young people's partnerships. Schools have identified and established individual councils, which can be very effective in ensuring that the voices of the children and young people are heard. There are broader forums across local authority areas in which that happens.

[184] There have been examples of where children and young people have been given an opportunity to scrutinise those who make those decisions. It may be your local education director or it may be the headteacher. So, there are effective ways in which that happens. Nobody would say that we get it right all the time, and we are on a constant learning curve to ensure that innovative approaches are developed so that, as technology moves on, and as children and young people look at different ways of communicating, we keep up with the

times. It is clearly accepted that the voices of children and young people need to be heard. How that happens again, as I said, is a learning curve. We need to learn from each other and to look at what works, but, importantly, it is accepted now that the voices of children and young people have to be heard.

[185] **Helen Mary Jones:** Of course, in this committee we hope that the voices would be heard and then acted upon.

[186] **Ms Alleyne:** Yes.

[187] **Helen Mary Jones:** I remind members and witnesses that we have a lot of questions that we would like to get through in the next 20 minutes, so I ask that we be as focused as we can. If we do not get to all our questions, we may want to write to you, and to Chris, to follow those up. Jonathan Morgan has the next question.

[188] **Jonathan Morgan:** Thank you, Chair. I have a question about the school effectiveness framework. If you want to refer to Chris, I do not mind if you come back to us on some of the detail. I am keen to understand how effective the school effectiveness framework is likely to be. We talk in very grandiose terms about having these effectiveness frameworks that are used as a tool to bring together local authority schools and so on to try to improve educational attainment and outcomes among poorer children in particular. While I agree with that, I am keen to find out how it works in practice. What does it mean for a school? What does it mean for the engagement with the local authority? How does it deliver an improvement in the educational achievement and outcomes for those young people who are struggling because of poor socioeconomic levels?

[189] **Ms Alleyne:** I might need to come back on some of the detail, after having some discussions with Chris.

[190] Going back to the first question around the alignment of national and local policies, the school effectiveness framework is another good example of local government and the Welsh Assembly Government working together to develop a strategy that will be taken forward to address low educational achievement and to improve literacy and numeracy. There is enthusiasm about the school effectiveness framework and a welcoming of it across local government. It brings together a range of lessons that we have learned recently about effective ways of challenging poverty and low educational attainment, which, as I said, is about people not doing it on their own. It is about community involvement, school involvement, and the leadership that is provided at all different levels. So, what the framework looks like and what will be taken forward addresses recommendations that have been made by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and by committees such as yours, on what has been effective and what will work in tackling low educational achievement and child poverty.

[191] The school effectiveness framework, as I understand it, has a board overseeing it. It is a bit early at the moment to say how it will work in practice. As I said, it has been warmly welcomed and it is based on evidence of what has worked in the past, so it is bringing that together. Without going down to too personal a level, I am aware of a school, because I am involved in it, where that happens already. It is about the community, local businesses, the voluntary sector, and leadership from the school at all levels on how you would increase that performance. The school, in its last Estyn report, outperforms compared to what you would expect given the socioeconomic circumstances of the children. The enthusiasm for it exists. We now need to implement it and put it into practice, and to ensure that all partners play their part, because it cannot be tackled in isolation. The strategy and aims are in place; it is now about ensuring that there is effective engagement.

10.40 a.m.

[192] On the second part of your question, Jonathan, I will need to talk to Chris and come back to you.

[193] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you, that is helpful.

[194] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning, both. We are moving, as you know, into an era of measuring outcomes rather than making more and more policy, so my question is along those lines. Can you tell us—if you cannot tell us, I am quite happy for you to come back with the information—in what ways local education authority and school performance is scrutinised and monitored to assess the disadvantaged pupils? What I am looking for is how would we, as Government, know how the local education authority is monitored in its performance to deliver an outcome for poorer pupils? We set the scene and say what we want to see being delivered; how is it monitored?

[195] **Ms Alleyne:** Again, that is a question on which we will need to come back to provide detail, but it was interesting, in preparing for this committee, to look at the Estyn report that came out in January on poverty and the links to educational attainment. Some of the key messages and findings identify a way forward and identify some of the work that authorities are already taking forward in identifying that performance.

[196] One of the issues that comes from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation research, and is reiterated by the Estyn report, is the need to look at pupils on an individual basis, to be able to track individual pupils' performance so that if there is a dip in performance, or it looks like there is going to be a dip in attainment, more targeted action can be put into supporting that individual child. The role of the school in that is going to be critical; the role of the teachers in that will be critical. I am not sure how that would be reported back to the LEA; that is something that we need to look at in more detail.

[197] Some of the other issues around extracurricular and after-school activities that also have a positive impact on people's social and emotional wellbeing, which then increases, if you like, their ability to perform better in school, are key issues that need to be gauged as well. It is difficult sometimes to know what the intervention is that has led to the outcome that you are looking for. It is very complex but, nonetheless, all those types of factors need to be monitored, to identify what works and what needs to be shared and replicated elsewhere. We would all say that we could point to schools and individual education establishments that are bucking the trend and doing well. What we are not so good at and we need to improve at is replicating that success elsewhere, ensuring that we support other schools to address those issues.

[198] I know that you have a question on Raising Attainment and Individual Standards in Education later on, but some of the feedback that we have had anecdotally is that schools have not necessarily had RAISE funding but have been able to learn from each other. Again, that is shared learning. So, the money has been invested in particular schools but those schools have had a role in working with others then to share that information and learning.

[199] **Lynne Neagle:** As you know, the Assembly Government has developed a set of child poverty indicators. Do you have any comment to make on the usefulness of those indicators? Could you comment on how confident you are that the Assembly Government will meet all its targets by this year?

[200] **Ms Warren:** The first thing to say is that local government is committed to doing all that it can to meet those indicators. The indicators were also helpful in that they focused minds on where action needed to be targeted. The work that the Assembly Government has done in partnership with us and partners in the voluntary sector to raise the profile of the issue

has helped. The project that I have worked on, which you have probably all heard about, Child Poverty Solutions—Wales, is a resource developed to support local government to meet some of these indicators and to also develop partnership working. It is not just local government that is going to meet the targets; it is health, support from the voluntary sector, and schools and education.

[201] As part of that work, we have developed quite a sophisticated self-assessment process, which the majority of councils have now completed. That helps them to understand, either from a departmental perspective or as a corporate body as a whole, where they are with the indicators, where they need to focus their action and how well they are doing. We have also changed it so that it can be done as part of the children and young people's partnership. Certainly, in this round of plans, it has helped inform the needs assessment and planning process.

[202] So, while we cannot say that we are confident that we can meet all the indicators, I think that the bodies responsible are certainly more aware of what they need to do to meet those targets.

[203] **Jonathan Morgan:** Sticking with Government targets but looking at the number of pupils leaving full-time education with no approved qualification, one of the Assembly Government's 2010 targets, or I think that they are called milestones, is to have 93 per cent of 16 to 18-year-olds in education, employment or training. Looking at the reverse of that, are there marked differences in the number of 16 to 18-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training between local authority areas? Is there a worrying pattern in some parts of Wales, with higher levels of those who are not in employment, education or training, or is it fairly standard?

[204] **Ms Alleyn:** One of the research pieces that I looked at yesterday was a snapshot in time of the number of children and young people not in education, employment or training. Some of it was counterintuitive, if you like. In some areas that have low socioeconomic circumstances and where, therefore, you might expect to see a higher level of NEETs, it is not necessarily reflected across the 22 local authorities. One of the difficulties is that the statistics on NEETs provide a snapshot and it is difficult to know what some of those longer-term trends are and how we should start to address them.

[205] There is also a very complex set of circumstances that can lead to children becoming NEET. Again, going back to the issue previously discussed, some of the solutions or interventions are very much going to have to be personal—looking at that child or young person's individual circumstances—because, obviously, poverty and low educational attainment are linked to issues with health and housing. It is not just education, employment and training; a number of factors can address the situation there. So, we need to look at bespoke solutions and ensure that the literacy and numeracy needs of that child, and the types of issues and social barriers that they can encounter, are included. Again, that needs a co-ordinated response from various agencies to make sure that it is comprehensive.

[206] There are a range of issues in the context of children and young people who, at the age of 16, find themselves not in education, employment or training. We would ask the committee to consider looking at pre-16 children who are not in education, employment or training and then to make the link to the recent guidance from the Assembly Government around children who are missing education. So, the 16-18 situation is a little snapshot but there are factors and issues that need to be addressed at earlier stages.

[207] There are variations between local authorities. We could point to some authorities that have done a number of things to reduce this number. We could do a bit more work on that, to provide you with a bit more evidence from those authorities on some of the actions

that they have taken to address those issues.

[208] On the issue of age, a colleague mentioned that the Enterprise and Learning Committee has recommended dealing with NEETs up to the age of 25 rather than to the age of 18. The Enterprise and Learning Committee is looking at that issue to see whether more intensive work needs to be provided up to the age of 25. Some issues around school-based counselling and some other support systems are crucial there as well.

[209] One concern that my colleague asked me to raise was that of not forgetting the 'E' for employment. It is not just about those not in education and training. Is it about trying to support the development of skills and apprenticeships and issues around ensuring that people have employment opportunities as well.

[210] **Jonathan Morgan:** I have a very quick supplementary question. I have been made aware that Careers Wales has, in the past, run some very interesting intervention projects where it has been able to help schools deal with young people, pre-16, who have demonstrated levels of disconnection with school, classes and fellow pupils, and who are at risk of exclusion and being NEET. There have been some projects where that has been tremendously successful. Does the WLGA have any evidence to support that or are you aware of some of the work that has been done on that by Careers Wales?

10.50 a.m.

[211] **Ms Alleyne:** Yes, we are aware of it. We would support it, because not every child wants to follow the academic route. There are other support mechanisms that need to be put in place to support children to develop skills and opportunities for themselves in areas that they are interested in. When you are looking at young offenders, in particular, who may have come out of institutions, them going straight back into the school environment may not be the best idea. It is about what we were saying about trying to ensure a personalised approach, looking at making effective use of the 14-19 pathways, and ensuring that the needs and interests of children and young people and what they would like to do are taken into account. Certainly, we will look to see whether there is any other evidence that we can provide you on that.

[212] **Helen Mary Jones:** I think that you mentioned a little bit earlier, Naomi, about looking at where local authorities have made interventions or led interventions that can be clearly demonstrated to have worked. We would be very interested to get some more information about that, as Members are very keen to hear about that.

[213] **Eleanor Burnham:** Mae hyn yn ddiddorol iawn i mi gan fy mod wedi addysgu plant a oedd yn tangyflawni. Yr ydych wedi dweud bod angen edrych ar blant iau. Yr ydym wedi cael llawer o dystiolaeth am bontio rhwng yr ysgol gynradd a'r ysgol uwchradd. Mae modd erbyn hyn i ysgolion weithio gyda'i gilydd i gynhyrchu cynlluniau pontio ac i fynd i'r afael â'r dirywiad yng nghyrrhaeddiad addysgol disgyblion ym mlynnyddoedd cyntaf yr ysgol uwchradd, sy'n allweddol. A oes gan ysgolion, colegau ac awdurdodau lleol unrhyw drefniadau ar waith i rannu arfer da o ran mynd i'r afael ag anghenion penodol disgyblion sydd o'r cefndiroedd tlotaf? A oes gennych unrhyw dystiolaeth sy'n awgrymu bod gan bobl ifanc

Eleanor Burnham: This is very interesting to me, as I used to teach underperforming children. You have said that there is a need to look at the youngest children. We have received a great deal of evidence about the transition from primary school to secondary school. Schools can now work together to produce transition schemes and to tackle the decline in pupils' educational attainment in the first years of secondary school, which is key. Do schools, colleges and local authorities have any arrangements in place to share good practice on how to tackle the specific needs of pupils from the poorest backgrounds? Do you have any evidence that suggests that young people have similar problems in moving from secondary school

broblemau tebyg wrth symud o ysgolion to further education?
uwchradd i addysg bellach?

[214] **Ms Warren:** The sharing of good practice is really important. From our point of view, as the body that represents all 22 councils, it is important for us to be aware of what is going on so that we can share that at a national level. One reason why we welcome the Families First initiative is that if you have a look at the project scope and documents that have now been produced for the consortia in the north and in the south, it demonstrates how it is building on the good practice that already exists. So we are looking at what works in certain authorities and we are able to network those in the consortia in order to share the experiences in a pragmatic and developmental way.

[215] In response to your question on schools and colleges, we will have to come back to you with some more detail on that. There is a school in Llanelli that is developing a professional learning community, whereby the headteachers get together at a junior level and secondary level to share information about what is going on. We can write to you with more information about that. To make another plug for the child poverty solutions, you might be aware that there is a library of practice there. It is Wales specific, but it also includes information from Europe and elsewhere in the UK, and we are promoting that work this week at the Eurochild European conference. So, that is saying, to an extent, 'Wales is taking a lead on this and look at what we do'.

[216] **Ms Alleyne:** The other point is that the school effectiveness framework is there to ensure that kind of initiative.

[217] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you both very much. The clock has beaten us, as I rather feared it might. We have a set of questions that we wanted to ask about free school meals and school uniforms, which we will send to you in writing, and also a set of questions about the funding streams, including raising attainment and individual standards in education in Wales, which we have not been able to get to today, but it is very important that we get answers to those. If you are happy for us to do this, we will send you those in writing. Thank you both for your written evidence and for your oral evidence today. We very much appreciate it and we will write to you with those follow-up questions, and ask that you send us answers on those and on the matters that have come up that you wanted to talk to Chris about before giving a response.

[218] Diolch yn fawr i Naomi ac Emily. Thank you, Naomi and Emily.

10.54 a.m.

Cynnig Trefniadol Procedural Motion

[219] **Helen Mary Jones:** Yr wyf yn awgrymu i'r pwyllgor ein bod yn cynnal sesiwn breifat er mwyn i ni gytuno ar yr adroddiad drafft. Cynigiaf fod **Helen Mary Jones:** I suggest to the committee that we hold a private session in order for us to agree the draft report. I move that

y pwyllgor yn penderfynu gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog Rhif 10.37. *the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 10.37.*

[220] 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 10.53 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 10.53 a.m.