



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

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

**Dydd Mawrth, 16 Tachwedd 2010  
Tuesday, 16 November 2010**

**Cynnwys**  
**Contents**

- 3 Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon  
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions
- 4 Dilyn yr Ymchwiliad i Dlodi Plant yng Nghymru: Ai Addysg yw'r Ateb?—Casglu  
Tystiolaeth  
Follow-up on Inquiry into Child Poverty in Wales: Eradication through Education—  
Evidence gathering
- 15 Dilyn yr Ymchwiliad i Rianta yng Nghymru a Rhoi'r Cynllun Gweithredu Rianta ar  
waith—Casglu Tystiolaeth  
Follow-up on Inquiry into Parenting in Wales and the Delivery of the Parenting  
Action Plan—Evidence Gathering
- 26 Cynnig Trefniadol  
Procedural Motion

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

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

**Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol**  
**Committee members in attendance**

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**

Shelley Davies	Rheolwr Partneriaeth, Partneriaeth Plant a Phobl Ifanc, Powys Partnership Manager, Children and Young People Partnership, Powys
Tania Hayward	Cydgysylltydd Rhianta, Blaenau Gwent, yn cynrychioli'r Bartneriaeth Plant a Phobl Ifanc Parenting Co-ordinator, Blaenau Gwent, representing the Children and Young People Partnership
Huw Lewis	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (y Dirprwy Weinidog dros Blant) Assembly Member, Labour (the Deputy Minister for Children)
Dr Chris Llewelyn	Cyfarwyddwr Dysgu Gydol Oes, Hamdden a Gwybodaeth, Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru Director of Lifelong Learning, Leisure and Information, Welsh Local Government Association
Eleanor Marks	Pennaeth yr Is-adran Gymunedau, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Head of the Communities Division, Welsh Assembly Government

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

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

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.22 a.m.*  
*The meeting began at 9.22 a.m.*

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

[1] **Helen Mary Jones:** Hoffwn **Helen Mary Jones:** I would like formally to  
 ddechrau rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod hwn o start the public part of this meeting of the

Bwyllgor Plant a Phobl Ifanc y Cynulliad yn ffurfiol. Croesawaf yr Aelodau, y Dirprwy Weinidog dros Blant a Ms Marks i'r cyfarfod, a chroesawaf y cyhoedd i'r oriel gyhoeddus. Atgoffaf bawb fod croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg. Mae clustffonau ar gael i glywed y cyfieithu ar y pryd neu i addasu lefel y sain. Gellir clywed y cyfieithu ar y pryd ar sianel 1, a gellir chwyddleisio'r sain ar gyfer cyfraniadau yn eu hiaith wreiddiol ar sianel 0. Gofynnaf i bawb ddiffodd unrhyw declynnau electronig, fel ffonau symudol, 'mwyar duon' neu alwyr. Nid yw'n ddigon i'w tawelu gan eu bod yn gallu amharu ar yr offer sain a darlledu. Os bydd y larwm tân yn seinio, bydd y tywyswyr yn dangos wrthym sut y dylem adael yr adeilad yn y modd mwyaf diogel.

Children and Young People Committee of the Assembly. I welcome Members, the Deputy Minister for Children and Ms Marks to the meeting, and I welcome the public to the public gallery. I remind everyone that they are welcome to contribute in English or Welsh. Headsets are available to hear the simultaneous interpretation or to amplify the sound. Interpretation can be heard on channel 1, and the verbatim feed in the original language can be amplified on channel 0. I ask everyone to turn off any electronic devices, such as mobile phones, BlackBerrys or pagers. It is not enough to silence them, as they can still interfere with the sound and broadcasting equipment. If the fire alarm should sound, the ushers will show us how to leave the building in the safest way.

[2] Croesawn Lynne eto, sy'n parhau i eilio dros Sandy, er ein bod yn bwriadu newid y sefyllfa honno cyn hir, a chroesawn Jonathan hefyd.

We again welcome Lynne, who continues to substitute for Sandy, although we intend to change that situation before long, and we also welcome Jonathan.

[3] Are you still substituting for Angela, Jonathan, or are you here as a full committee member?

[4] **Jonathan Morgan:** I am a full committee member.

[5] **Helen Mary Jones:** Symudwn ymlaen, felly, i'r eitem nesaf ar yr agenda.

**Helen Mary Jones:** We move on, therefore, to the next item on the agenda.

9.23 a.m.

**Dilyn yr Ymchwiliad i Dlodï Plant yng Nghymru: Ai Addysg yw'r Ateb?—  
Casglu Tystiolaeth  
Follow-up on Inquiry into Child Poverty in Wales: Eradication through  
Education—Evidence gathering**

[6] **Helen Mary Jones:** Mae hwn yn gyfle inni glywed tystiolaeth yn ymwneud â defnyddio'r system addysg i ddileu tlodi plant yng Nghymru. Croesawaf y Dirprwy Weinidog dros Blant ac Eleanor Marks, sydd wedi ymuno â ni y bore yma.

**Helen Mary Jones:** This is an opportunity for us to hear evidence on how the education system can be used to eradicate child poverty in Wales. I welcome the Deputy Minister for Children and Eleanor Marks, who have joined us this morning.

[7] I will take this opportunity, once again, to thank the Deputy Minister, as he is always very willing to come and give evidence and always very responsive to the points that the committee raises. If the witnesses are happy to do so, we will go straight into questions.

[8] To what extent will the Government's new child poverty strategy address criticisms over the lack of strategic co-ordination from the Government in its plans for tackling poverty? You may remember that one of the things that came out of our last report was that there was, perhaps, a lack of understanding nationally of what was expected of schools and other public

bodies.

[9] **The Deputy Minister for Children (Huw Lewis):** Thank you, Chair. I hope that the strategy addresses it wholly and completely. It has been a while since that report was published—two years, I think. Several significant things have happened since then to ensure a strategic overview regarding our direction of travel on child poverty. It is worth mentioning that we have changed the law. We have the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, which gives a legal context for the whole thing for the entire Welsh devolved public sector, including us. That is in force. We have the strategy and delivery plan, which I will publish in January. That was consulted on during the summer this year. We had an enormous response. In fact, we have had to delay the publication of the strategy slightly, and not just because of the volume of the response, as the quality of the responses makes it worth spending a bit more time on them. So, the strategy and the delivery plan will be out in the new year. Of course, there is a wholly new approach on the ground now through Families First, which we may want to talk about later. There are pioneers in northern and southern consortia already working at quite a brisk pace, I can tell you, on bringing an integrated service around the child and the family.

[10] Without wanting to make too much of a fuss about it, there is also the matter of my appointment, and the commitment by the First Minister through that appointment, to put children's issues, and child poverty in particular, at the centre of our concerns and near the top of our list of priorities.

[11] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning, Deputy Minister. Children and young people's partnerships have a responsibility to ensure that there is adequate support from parents in their local areas—

[12] **Helen Mary Jones:** Sorry, Joyce, but I think that we are on the wrong questions. We have got so many sets of questions today. Sorry about that.

[13] **Joyce Watson:** I will start again. What consideration, if any, have you made of the potential impact of policy changes at Westminster, particularly with regard to social security and the impact on the achievement of the target to eradicate child poverty by 2020?

[14] **Huw Lewis:** Thank you, Joyce. Of course, it is a daily worry—an hourly concern—about what impact there might be on our plans to eradicate child poverty. We are sticking to our target to eradicate it by 2020. That is our stated commitment as an Assembly Government. We have already seen £18 billion of cuts announced to benefits and so on. Whatever the Westminster Government's agenda might be with regard to the back-to-work agenda that Iain Duncan Smith is talking about—and that is fine and grand, and I hope it works—it is two to three years away. In the meantime, we have the almost immediate removal of £18 billion-worth of spending power from some of the poorest people in society. Of course, that will include people with children, and we have to worry about the effect on those children.

[15] One of the things that I am proposing we do in trying to keep up with the speed of change that is coming at us from Westminster—and I would say that the Westminster Government's almost indecent haste to introduce these reforms is causing as much of a headache as anything else—is to have the part of the delivery plan that will be connected to the child poverty strategy as a living document. In other words, we would not publish a paper and ink document, but keep it alive and online, so that we are fleet of foot and nimble, if you like, in responding to changes as they are announced—which seems to happen almost daily, and without any consultation with the Assembly Government in many instances. These are things that deeply affect what we are trying to do and we have to stay on top of them. It is going to be difficult, and the picture changes almost daily. That sort of instability is not

helpful with regard to how we support children.

[16] **Helen Mary Jones:** I wish to ask a brief and practical supplementary question. There are going to be big changes to the benefits system. Are there steps that the Government can take in the context of the child poverty strategy to ensure that all those who give benefits advice in Wales are fully upskilled and fully enabled to respond, because we are going to move to quite a different climate? We have seen incremental change in the past, but this is potentially a complete change. Are we confident that those giving benefits advice are going to be up to the game?

[17] **Huw Lewis:** I can tell you that that is at the forefront of our discussions. In fact, when I met the southern consortium, which consists of Rhondda Cynon Taf, Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr, just last week, this was a hot item on the agenda. The consortium was very concerned about ensuring that family and information services and partner agencies, such as Citizens Advice and so on, are up to speed and properly resourced in order to deliver an enhanced service to meet, apart from anything else, the increased weight of need that we anticipate. Many of my colleagues around the table will have already noticed the increased volume of worried people in their surgeries who are seeking advice about how this might hit them.

9.30 a.m.

[18] With regard to the general picture, my particular concerns are to do with what these changes mean, first for the picture for us in the macro-economy and its ability to produce jobs, as it is unclear what Westminster will do to help us with the heavy lifting. Secondly, the two groups that I am particularly concerned about are families affected by disability, whether it is the parents or children or both, and the thousands of carers out there, some of them young, who face enormous obstacles in making their route to work. The dialogue with Westminster is barely formed in respect of what this means for us in a devolved context. There is very little communication or forewarning of what is intended.

[19] **Joyce Watson:** My supplementary follows on from that. Charles Clarke announced the axing of £50 million from the legal aid fund yesterday, which is the biggest axing since the 1940s. That could clearly have consequences for children and parents, possibly by forcing parents to stay in relationships that are not conducive to their wellbeing or their children's. How concerned are you about the impact of that axe to legal aid, which now might force families that might benefit from not staying together to stay together, and what about the impact of that on children?

[20] **Huw Lewis:** Again, we have barely had time to draw breath on the announcements on legal aid. I understand that there are some exemptions to some aspects of family law. I think the risk of harm is one of the exemptions—let us hope that the interpretation of what harm means will protect the prospects of all children in such circumstances. It is the speed of this that is causing me an enormous amount of concern. Take the announcement on the youth justice board for instance, which is another element of rapid change that we are facing. As a Minister in Wales, I had about eight hours' notice, unofficially through a grapevine of concerned individuals, and through no official channel whatsoever, of what was to become of the youth justice board. We are heavily committed to the community element, particularly with regard to community safety and how it impacts upon our work with young offenders. That kind of partnership is no partnership at all given that change is not communicated from one end of the M4 to the other.

[21] **Helen Mary Jones:** Jonathan Morgan will follow up briefly on this, and then I am keen to move on, because we want to get on to the education elements, as well as the broader child poverty.

[22] **Jonathan Morgan:** The changes to legal aid are highly significant when you consider that, for many years, there were practitioners throughout Wales and the UK who had built up significant expertise within the fields of family law and criminal law through the legal aid framework. Many of us were quite surprised at the extent of the review that was conducted by the previous Government, which led to the significant change, whereby there was a contraction in the number of practitioners who were able to offer a legal aid service. That clearly has an impact on some potentially vulnerable families. Has the Deputy Minister had any conversations with or made contact with Kenneth Clarke? I think that Joyce meant Kenneth Clarke, not Charles Clarke, given that the latter lost his seat in the last election.

[23] **Joyce Watson:** I apologise for that.

[24] **Jonathan Morgan:** So, Deputy Minister, have you been in contact with the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice's department to discuss this matter and to see whether the Government is minded to review the situation, because I also understand that a significant number of concerns are now being raised by MPs?

[25] **Huw Lewis:** No, not as yet, but we will seek those discussions. I have, at some point, written to every single one of my Westminster colleagues because my portfolio is a bit odd in the sense that it does not quite fit with Westminster portfolio definitions. There are a number of UK Ministers to whom I relate, and I have written to every single one of them, asking for discussions, but I have been directed to their officials every time.

[26] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is worrying. Eleanor has the next question.

[27] **Eleanor Burnham:** Mae'r targedau ynghylch addysg sydd wedi'u cynnwys yn y dangosyddion tldi plant yn gysylltiedig â'r boblogaeth berthnasol gyffredinol o blant a phobl ifanc, yn hytrach na phlant a phobl ifanc sy'n byw mewn cartrefi incwm isel yn benodol. A allwch ddweud wrthym pam mae hynny'n wir? **Eleanor Burnham:** The education targets included in the child poverty indicators relate to the overall relevant child and young person population, rather than specifically children and young people living in low-income households. Can you tell us why that is the case?

[28] **Huw Lewis:** I was responsible for the shape of the education indicators—the milestones and targets—so I constructed that back then. To give you a quick review of history, the idea of the targets at that time, to which we remain committed, was to bring the level of the most deprived at least up to the level of the average over the period of time to which the milestones and targets applied. There was variation in how those could be constructed across various portfolio areas, given that we have historically measured things in different ways in education, health and so on. We also learnt from the experience of the Scots at the time, who had a rigorous series of multiple targets. We felt that the Scots may have made a mistake in that they had constructed a too elaborate series of targets.

[29] We remain committed to the education indicators. They grew out of things like 'The Learning Country 2: Delivering the Promise', and the education milestones and targets contained within it. There may be change down the road as regards the current Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning's view of how we measure things such as attainment and how we construct a literacy strategy and so on. So, there may be a need to change how we measure these things during the next period, but we must stick with the 13 broad aims that we have set ourselves. We will remain committed to measuring our success as we go along. So, those milestones and targets will not be thrown out of the window.

[30] We are also due to receive new and interesting data at the end of this month with

regard to the educational attainment of children who receive free school meals. That may inform the way that we measure the educational attainment of specific groups of children in future. Part of the trouble, way back when we introduced the milestones and targets, was that, in the educational sphere, some things were measured and some things were not. The picture is changing, and I hope that we will be in a situation within a year or two when we will have a much more subtle and useful set of information about educational attainment and how deprivation impacts upon it.

[31] **Eleanor Burnham:** Can you give us examples of that? Are you talking about literacy, numeracy or both, or behaviour? The people who are watching or listening might be quite interested in targeting, but it might mean quite different things to different people. So, could you just clarify that, please?

9.40 a.m.

[32] **Huw Lewis:** Perhaps I will hand over to Eleanor to give you some of the detail on this. Although it is not part of my ministerial area of responsibility, I know that the Minister is looking specifically at the strategic approach that we take to literacy. Eleanor, would you like to add to that?

[33] **Ms Marks:** It is difficult to give concrete examples. It is an area of expertise that falls under the responsibility of the Department for Children, Education Lifelong Learning and Skills and not ours.

[34] **Eleanor Burnham:** Okay. The reason that I ask is that we have just done a really important piece of work in the Communities and Culture Committee on financial inclusion. When you look holistically at getting people out of poverty and the dreadful situation in which many people find themselves, surely numeracy is also important, so that people know the difference between an annual percentage rate of 0 per cent and 2,000 per cent. Is that a part of your targeting?

[35] **Huw Lewis:** It is for me, particularly the financial inclusion and educational aspects of it. Sandy is not on the committee anymore, but that piece of work grew out of some joint work that Sandy and I did and it was born in Flint High School, if I remember rightly. We now have a national programme of financial awareness for young people across Wales that grew out of that work several years ago. Of course, numeracy has to be a part of that.

[36] We also have to face up to the fact that there are many parents out there who we would not touch through personal and social education classes, or whatever. They interact with family information services and partner agencies like credit unions and so on and we will have to lean on those groups more and more. Citizens Advice has a crucial role to play and we have to do everything that we can to support the dissemination of good, accurate information and advice throughout our communities. They will need it now more than ever.

[37] **Helen Mary Jones:** We will now move to a set of questions that you may feel are specifically DCELLS questions. If you find yourself able to give a broad response, but think that we should contact the Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning for more detail, please feel free to say so and we can then take them up in writing with the Minister, or even invite Leighton Andrews to committee.

[38] **Jonathan Morgan:** In 2008, when we reported, the committee took evidence from a number of individuals who suggested that the school effectiveness framework did not get off to the best start. How successful do you think that the effectiveness framework has been in taking on the challenge that many young people from disadvantaged backgrounds face in achieving educational attainments compared to their peers and friends from non-



disadvantaged backgrounds?

[39] **Huw Lewis:** The school effectiveness framework is all about that variation, which is caused by socioeconomic conditions. We are all well aware of, and are well versed in, the statistics relating to educational attainment, which are stark and frightening. The situation is entrenched. I cannot put words into the Minister's mouth, but if my colleague, Leighton Andrews, were here, he would say that we have to have a relentless focus on literacy and numeracy. We should not take our eye off the ball when it comes to the impact of poverty and deprivation on educational attainment.

[40] For me, the educational attainment of a child right from the beginning, from the foundation phase, will be an inherent part of the way in which we roll out Families First. The child's performance at school and his or her development in the round will be a central part of constructing a support network around the family. The attainment of the child, next to things like safety and decent housing and so on, would be at the top of the list. It comes back to the basics, such as how we construct a team around the family within each community in Wales that does not allow children to get left behind through no fault of their own, because of an accident of birth. I know that the consortia in the north and south are starting to have that dialogue. There is already some really good practice out there; there is some good stuff going on. Nowhere is the picture completely joined up, and ensuring that there are no gaps for children to fall through is the challenge of Families First.

[41] **Jonathan Morgan:** When was the school effectiveness framework brought in?

[42] **Ms Marks:** It was brought in in 2006.

[43] **Jonathan Morgan:** So, we have had four years of that. Will you outline what progress has been made and what practical steps the school effectiveness framework has been able to co-ordinate in order to meet this challenge?

[44] **Huw Lewis:** As I said, this is not my ministerial responsibility. I think that we now have a consistent and coherent approach to this situation across all 22 local authorities, which was not there before.

[45] **Ms Marks:** I think that it is something on which we should reply to the committee in writing because it is part of the DCELLS brief rather than—

[46] **Jonathan Morgan:** I accept the fact that your role cuts across various Government departments, and obviously that puts you in the rather more tricky position of trying to see where the co-ordination is and trying to get updates from various Government departments as to how your portfolio is affected by what they are doing. However, I am just wondering what role your bit of the Assembly Government has in trying to ensure that the school effectiveness framework deals with the consequences of poverty.

[47] **Huw Lewis:** I suppose that it is about that interface between the school in its wider sense and the community. We must remember that it is still a work in progress with regard to how we build community-focused schools and how schools face outwards towards the community, which means towards families, towards children as members of those families and towards members of the communities in which those families live. My chief area of concern would be to ensure that we have an effective commitment from everyone on the ground to ensure that community-focused schooling really does have a reality behind the label and that we are concerned with the problems that families as a whole might be facing and the impact that those problems might be having on the child's attainment.

[48] So, for instance, as we build Families First, we need a situation where, on the ground,

professionals are dealing with the complexity of an issue that might present itself, which may not be based at the school at all, but might be affecting what is happening to the child's education. For instance, there may be an overcrowding problem at home. It is about how you build a team of professionals that is aware and alerted to the fact that this overcrowding problem is leading to an educational problem or a behavioural problem, and what professionals you need to bring together around that family to address that as quickly as possible. It is also about what kind of heavy lifting you need to do in order to clear the obstacles that are being placed in the way of the development of that child.

[49] This seems remarkably obvious, but the joined-up approach to this stuff generally does not happen. It is not subtle enough to be able to deal with that kind of issue. So, interventions are often triggered too late. For instance, if it is an overcrowding issue, it would simply be regarded as a housing issue, pure and simple, and it would be regarded as the end of the story, but it is not. It is an issue that has an impact on other areas of the family's life, particularly with regard to children's educational development. That is the area in which I am trying to fit in the reform of the way in which all sorts of teams of professionals work—from health professionals through to the educational side and the voluntary sector—and interact with a community-focused school to ensure that we have a seamless approach.

[50] **Helen Mary Jones:** I just remind Members that we have 15 more minutes with the Deputy Minister and quite a bit of ground that we want to cover. Everything that we have done so far has been useful. We may end up needing to write to you, Deputy Minister, about some of the further questions that we have because we may not get to them all, and I am conscious that Members are anxious to finish promptly at 11 a.m.

[51] **Lynne Neagle:** In your written paper, Huw, you state that some local authorities are more advanced than others in developing the community-focused schools agenda. Will you tell us a bit about what the Assembly Government is doing to address that, particularly in deprived communities?

9.50 a.m.

[52] **Huw Lewis:** I can tell you that, in my travels around Wales, I have seen quite a spectrum of understanding of what community-focused schooling actually means. The interpretation of it on the ground is not uniform. You would not necessarily expect it—and would not necessarily want it—to be a Napoleonic approach replicated all over the country at the same time.

[53] **Helen Mary Jones:** I do not know why not. [*Laughter.*]

[54] **Huw Lewis:** I could not possibly comment. What is very clear is that we have some extraordinarily good practice in community-focused schooling, but there is a journey to travel here as well. What I am encouraging our partner agencies to do—and, in this case, I mean local government in the main—is to really grasp the opportunities that lie around a good interpretation of community-focused schooling, to protect in particular the most deprived families and the least well-off kids from the impact of the economic situation that we find ourselves in. Again, that is tied to the way in which Families First will develop. It is not just a case of thinking about the bricks and mortar of a school and how it can be best used out of hours, at holiday times or whatever, but of thinking in the round about how the school as a living institution serves a living community. It is about thinking how the school can step in and help with the life chances of young families, in particular, in everything from their financial security and personal family finances—by doing something simple like hosting the local credit union, as our secondary schools are starting to do—to moving towards addressing the agenda of the skills problem that faces a great many parents in young, low-income families, perhaps with partner agencies such as further education or, say, the University of the

Heads of the Valleys.

[55] There is a huge area of work here, despite the economic situation. I do not just want to say that we are victims of an economic nightmare and a nasty Government in Westminster that does not smile at us and so on. There are things that we need to do here; we need to shift ourselves as a devolved Government and get our act together, ensuring that everyone understands exactly what is meant by a community-focused school and that it is not simply about having an evening class now and again. This is about entering into the life of the community and trying to shift for the better the position of families.

[56] **Helen Mary Jones:** Jonathan, can we go back to question 6?

[57] **Jonathan Morgan:** In evidence to the committee, the WLGA told us that, although RAISE, the raising attainment and individual standards in education in Wales programme, had a focus on disadvantaged households, thresholds put in place meant that many of the children and young people who were most in need of help and benefits were simply not getting the support anticipated through that scheme. Do you agree with that view?

[58] **Huw Lewis:** There was a free-school-meals line drawn here, was there not? I think that an uptake of 20 per cent in free school meals was the trigger for RAISE. Everyone with half an ounce of sense knows that free school meals is blunt as a measurement—it is a little crude, but no-one has ever really come up with anything that can be used as easily as that measurement. It does have a relationship with attainment. When you draw a line, as was the case with this at 20 per cent, you are necessarily going to exclude and disappoint some people. It is the case that there have been successes within the programme, and where it has been operating it has been welcomed enormously. Those schools would not want to let go of that. So, there are successes, but, where these lines are drawn, there will be the issues of political choice and prioritisation. Issues such as that are going to be thrown at us more and more now as budgetary issues take hold and constrain our action.

[59] **Eleanor Burnham:** Un o'r ysgolion gorau yr wyf wedi ei gweld o ran yr hyn yr ydych yn sôn amdano, sef gweithio yn y gymuned, yw'r ysgol yn Rhosymedre. Gobeithiaf y gallwch edrych ar yr hyn sy'n digwydd yn Rhosymedre ym mwrdeistref sirol Wrecsam. Mae Ros Harrison yno yn unigryw yn fy marn i.

**Eleanor Burnham:** One of the best schools that I have seen in relation to what you are talking about—working in the community—is the school in Rhosymedre. I hope that you will be able to look at what is happening in Rhosymedre in Wrexham county borough. Ros Harrison there is unique in my opinion.

[60] Yn Lloegr, mae'r Llywodraeth yn ystyried cyflwyno'r premiwm disgyblion i dargedu cyllid at y disgyblion tlotaf. A yw Llywodraeth Cymru yn ystyried cyflwyno premiwm disgyblion i blant a phobl ifanc Cymru?

In England, the Government is considering introducing the pupil premium to target funding at the poorest pupils. Is the Welsh Government considering introducing a pupil premium for Welsh children and young people?

[61] **Huw Lewis:** No, we are not—that is the blunt answer. We have our own programmes, which we are developing, are proud of and which we have worked hard on in order to address the educational attainment of the least well-off kids in particular, and we will grow and develop those programmes. As I mentioned, the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills is looking carefully at having a literacy strategy, which will have implications for the way in which we invest. I know that the Minister is also looking for a framework power for funding in Wales. We hope that we will get that power devolved so that we in Wales have wide-ranging powers to look at school funding issues, as the Westminster Government has done in the case of the pupil premium, if policy takes us in that direction.

The next Assembly elections and the commitments that parties make in their manifestos as part of the election process will have a bearing on how we face up to developments across the border, such as the pupil premium. We can see what lessons there might be for us to learn, and it is for the Minister to decide in the future whether they are learnt in one direction or another. The attempt has been made to draw the power down.

[62] **Helen Mary Jones:** Are you able to stay with us for a few extra minutes, Deputy Minister? If you were to stay until 10.10 a.m., that would be brilliant, because we could get through a few more of our questions.

[63] **Jonathan Morgan:** Going back to the point that you made earlier about free school meals being a blunt way of identifying those children who are most in need, the committee, in its original report, recommended that monitoring should not focus exclusively on educational attainment but rather on targets relating to pastoral care, such as the number of children who are permanently excluded from school and so on. Do you intend to include any new targets or milestones in the new child poverty delivery plan to reflect the importance of the school community and associated learning and social activities?

[64] **Huw Lewis:** We do not intend to include targets or milestones at the moment; I do not have any immediate thoughts or considerations about adding them. There was a lot to learn from the Scottish experience, because the Scots had done a lot right and had done better on child poverty reduction than the rest of the UK. However, a mistake that the Scots made initially was that they got a little too elaborate about the way in which they measured progress, which led to a rabbit-in-headlights syndrome, whereby people were obsessing about statistics rather than getting on with delivery. At the centre of all this will be Families First, and how it interacts with the school environment, the child, the child's family and the community. In the round, the social and cultural capital of families and children will be of as much concern as the bare bones of scores in arithmetic or spelling tests.

10.00 a.m.

[65] **Ms Marks:** Building that relationship between the home, the parent and the school is key, and when the delivery plan for the child poverty strategy is published, we are likely to make it a living document that everyone can see regularly and hold us to account for. We will be able to look at ongoing relationships between us and delivery agents and targets in that document.

[66] **Eleanor Burnham:** Pa mor hyderus ydych chi fod plant a phobl ifanc a allai elwa'n wirioneddol o gael cinio a brecwast yn rhad ac am ddim yn yr ysgol yn manteisio ar yr hawl hon erbyn hyn? Beth mae'r ffigurau diweddaraf yn dangos? **Eleanor Burnham:** How confident are you that children and young people who could really benefit from free school lunches and breakfasts are now taking up their entitlement? What do the latest figures show?

[67] **Helen Mary Jones:** Concern was raised in our last report that, particularly with regard to free school breakfasts, it was not always the children who needed them most who were taking up their entitlement.

[68] **Huw Lewis:** Take-up is good, and I have some figures here. The latest school census shows that about 60,000 children, which is about 74 per cent of eligible pupils, took up their free school meal entitlement on that census day. That breaks down to 78 per cent of eligible pupils in primary schools, 75 per cent of eligible pupils in special schools, and about 68 per cent in secondary schools.

[69] **Eleanor Burnham:** However, there is a percentage of schoolchildren still not taking

that up. What is the Government doing to encourage take-up?

[70] **Huw Lewis:** First of all, the economic situation will force more families who are eligible for free school meals, but who have chosen not to, to do so, because they feel that they have to. There is a role for us in WAG and for schools and governing bodies to take a close look at how we are helping families to keep their heads above the water. Things like parental choice matter here along with school policy with regard to whether the children are allowed to leave the site at lunchtime, for instance. Our attitude towards fast food outlets near schools will also need to be reviewed. There is also the continual battle against stigma. A lot of good work has been done by my ministerial colleagues, over a number of years, with regard to ticketless school meals and various other attempts to try to remove the stigma.

[71] I am not pretending, Eleanor, that there is not more to be done. We are about three quarters of the way there with regard to take-up, but that is not enough. There is a job of work still to do, and many families that are perhaps on the edge of managing when it comes to family finance will find themselves in need of greater assistance. Let us make sure that, if we can step up to the mark with things like free school meals, we do not label families and cause difficulties for them in that way. People can be very resilient with regard to avoiding stigma and they are quite prepared to suffer to avoid it. We must build a system, and schools are crucial to that system, for instance the attitude of headteachers and governing bodies to things like free school meals and the affordability of school uniforms. People need to examine their conscience, as families begin to struggle with their personal finance.

[72] **Helen Mary Jones:** The stigma issue came out strongly to the committee, with young people saying that their parents wanted them to take up free school meals, but, when they were still put in a position of being in a different queue or having a different colour ticket, it was just not possible. We all recognise the embarrassment that children can suffer in their teens, so we will probably put it to you, Deputy Minister, that a point may come when the Government will have to tell schools and governing bodies what to do about some of this stuff. It is right to encourage them, but we are now two years on. For instance, on Friday, I was at a powerful conference organised by Save the Children where children living in poverty now were describing some of the same stigma issues that were described to the committee two years ago. So, we will come back to you with some more detail on that.

[73] **Joyce Watson:** Moving on, I agree with the Chair: now is the time to tell people what they have to do to reduce stigma if they do not have the good sense and the common sense to see the damage for themselves. One way of removing the stigma, which the committee suggested in its 2008 report, is to provide universal free school meals. While we accept that you are looking at the nutritional standard of the meal at the moment and we await the outcome of that, might you be able to give us a time frame for a decision on whether universal free school meals will be piloted?

[74] **Huw Lewis:** All that I can say on that is that, in the current financial climate, constructing a universal free school meals programme would be extraordinarily difficult and politically brave. However, an Assembly election is coming up. Let us see what the parties put to the electorate about how they might want to assist families across the country and whether this might be a priority. There is universality on school milk and on the school breakfast initiative, which is an option that can be taken up by local authorities, schools and governing bodies, and which has had good take-up and is potentially universal. As far as I am aware, only the Scots have gone down the route of universal free school meals, but they have had to put the brakes on their programme because of financial restraints. At the moment, it is only being aimed at those schools that have passed a free school meals threshold, so 10 per cent to 15 per cent of schools in Scotland are delivering universal free school meals, and a question mark is hanging over the whole programme there.

[75] As politicians, and because of the point that we have reached in the political cycle, what matters is what political parties will put to the electorate next May when it comes to such matters. Realistically speaking, on this budget round and the difficulties that the Assembly Government has been facing, which I think everyone understands, a universal free school meals policy is not a viable option at this point in time.

[76] **Helen Mary Jones:** This will have to be our last question.

[77] **Lynne Neagle:** The BMG Research study into the costs of education has now been completed. What steps is the Assembly Government taking as a result of its findings?

[78] **Huw Lewis:** We are still thinking this through. I have mentioned one or two issues, such as uniforms. Our school uniform grant has one of the highest take-ups of any grant that there ever was. Take-up for that grant is about 97 per cent, so it is well worth preserving. This is a work in progress. As you said, this research has only just been completed and the numbers are being crunched as I speak. Perhaps Eleanor can throw a little more light on this.

[79] **Ms Marks:** We are starting to look at the training within schools, both for teachers looking at aspects of poverty and to raise governors' awareness of the cost of education, be that of uniforms or school trips, so that there is a greater focus on the cost outside of the school of taking part in education. It is at a starting point, but we are developing the training that needs to be in place to help new teachers, which will then be rolled out to teachers already in the profession, and we are also working with governors to take that forward.

[80] **Helen Mary Jones:** With that, I thank the Deputy Minister and Ms Marks for being with us today. There were some other questions that we did not get to ask, but it was worth exploring the areas that we explored in more detail. If we may, we will write to you, Deputy Minister, with the remaining questions.

10.10 a.m.

[81] One thing that I would like to put to you briefly, before you leave us, is that the Families First programme will potentially have a very big impact on the areas of work that this committee has a responsibility to scrutinise. I do not know how committee members feel about this—and you might also want to go away and give this some consideration with your officials, Deputy Minister—but perhaps we could have an in-depth briefing outside of formal committee time about what Families First is trying to achieve, and about the pilot projects, because we come back to it again and again. I feel personally—I do not know how other Members feel; I know that there is a lot of pressure on everyone's time—that that would help us a lot. I feel as if I have had a glimpse of it, but I would like a proper, hard look at what the Government is trying to achieve with this.

[82] **Huw Lewis:** Absolutely. As you say, Chair, it will be at the centre of our child poverty work. It is not the whole of it, but it will be at the centre, and will be the driver of what happens at community level, and how we work with families at the sharp end of the issues. There is some exciting stuff going on, and if there is anything that I can do to facilitate the committee's insight into what is happening on the ground, I would be more than happy to do that. I am absolutely sure that the two consortia that we are dealing with would also be more than happy to work with the committee. I think that they are quite excited themselves, and are already quite proud of the progress that they have made in such a short time. So, yes, this will be at the centre of how things develop in Wales for some years to come.

[83] **Helen Mary Jones:** Thank you very much, Minister. We will liaise with you and your officials and look for an opportunity in the new year to give some time to this as committee members to improve our understanding. Diolch yn fawr iawn.

10.11 a.m.

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

[84] **Helen Mary Jones:** Gydag **Helen Mary Jones:** With apologies for the ymddiheuriadau am y ffaith ein bod yn fact that we are running a few minutes late, rhedeg cwpl o funudau yn hwyr, symudwn i'r we move on to the next item. I welcome Dr eitem nesaf. Croesawaf Dr Chris Llewelyn, Chris Llewelyn, Tania Hayward and Shelly Tania Hayward a Shelley Davies o Davies of the Welsh Local Government Gymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru at y Association to the table to discuss the bwrdd i drafod y cynllun rhianta yng parenting plan in Wales. Nhymru.

[85] I understand that you will begin your evidence session by showing us a short film. This is the bit where I panic about what will happen with the technology. We will keep our fingers crossed.

*Dangoswyd ffilm fer. Mae'r canlynol yn drawsgrifiad o'r geiriau a lafarwyd.  
A short film was shown. The following is a transcription of the words spoken.*

**Dinah the Dinosaur:** *Oh wow! It is you lot again. I am really pleased to see you!*

**Narrator:** *Dinah the dinosaur makes an appearance with reception children at Ladywell Green Infants School in Newtown, Powys, in mid Wales. She is teaching them how to behave in class.*

**Dinah the Dinosaur:** *You look really smart with those new socks, I can see. Can you do criss-cross legs to show me how to do those rules?*

**Narrator:** *The children learn how to use their listening ears and keep their eyes on the teacher: all age-appropriate positive commands. It is part of the Incredible Years programme started in America and now widely used here. The headteacher of another school that uses the programme says that it has changed all interactions with pupils.*

**Yvonne Naylor:** *This is a very well-researched programme, and the effects that we have had over 10 years have been phenomenal in our school. We recently had our Estyn inspection, and we had a grade 1, meaning that we were outstanding and sector leading for provision. Dino-school was part of that provision.*

**Nikki Piggott:** *Could you put that over there, please, Stevie?*

**Narrator:** *Nikki Piggott enjoys some quality time with two of her three sons. Steven is on the autistic spectrum, and Tom is borderline attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. She has had two Incredible Years parenting courses, and has not looked back.*

**Nikki Piggott:** *It only takes someone to push a button; one of my sons in particular just could not deal with that, which really got me down. We were lucky to have the Dino-school that the school had initiated, plus the special educational needs teacher had gone on the Incredible Years course as well, and really turned such a bad situation for my son into a very good and positive one.*

**Narrator:** *There are programmes for parents, children and teachers that complement each other and use similar principles, delivering a consistent message throughout.*

**Dr Susan Evans:** *The key message is that we really want parents to focus on positive behaviours. We know that children will work for attention, whether it is negative or positive, and if we can give attention to that positive behaviour, that is really going to make things better.*

*We know that children who start to develop behaviour problems at three and four—unless we can get in there and really give some protective factors, really support those children and those families, we know that those children are likely to go on to have significant problems into adolescence and adulthood.*

**Shelley Davies:** *For us, the benefit of the programme is the early intervention and prevention. It is working with children and families at as early a stage as possible to help with behaviour management and to help prevent issues from escalating to a point where children would need more intensive supervision. It is also more cost effective, because low levels of investment at the front end save a huge amount on costly intervention at the other end.*

**Narrator:** *Dr Evans mentors class facilitators, analysing video of their sessions. The Incredible Years approach is not new, but what is new is the way that it is delivered here—by many partners from voluntary and statutory agencies, co-ordinated by Barnardo's.*

**Delyth Raynsford:** *What is really important is that, in these quite difficult financial times for local authorities and for organisations, be they voluntary or statutory, we can all work together in partnership. We all have something to bring to the table. We have managed to develop a really strong, diverse staff group. Staff have developed their skills and their knowledge, but also the way in which they work with parents, carers and with children and young people. They bring together different perspectives from their professional backgrounds and it is all put into the pot so that we have a much more holistic way of working with parents and children.*

**Amanda Lewis:** *We have Barnardo's as our co-ordinating agency and a number of other agencies contributing to that. It has grown from strength to strength. We have great sign-up from all of our partner agencies and we will continue to train our staff across all of our partners, so that we have an integrated workforce that is skilled to use the skills of parenting in a range of different ways.*

**Shelley Davies:** *It has not been the sort of initiative that has been landed on the authority with a huge cash injection, but then, when the cash is withdrawn, the programme collapses; it has come from the bottom up. We have threaded it through the workforce, so, once again, there are social workers, educational psychologists, disability nurses and voluntary sector staff all delivering this programme. So, even if they are not delivering a parenting group, they are modelling the practice and the principles in their day-to-day work.*

**Narrator:** *Powys County Council has now received recognition for this work. It has been nominated as a finalist in the 2010 Welsh Local Government Association's Wales Excellence Awards. The programmes on behaviour and social competence for children, parents and families are delivered consistently in the home, in schools and in childcare settings. It is this consistent message that makes it so effective.*

[86] **Helen Mary Jones:** *I thank Shelley Davies for bringing in the video for us. We do not usually watch them in committee, we usually take them away with us, but I thought that, because it was quite brief, it was well worth showing it in the committee. So, thank you very*



much for that.

[87] I welcome you all. Chris Llewelyn is a regular contributor here, but I would like to reassure our new witnesses that this is an informal environment compared to many Assembly committees. We are interested to hear the story from the front line. So, try to be as relaxed as you can and tell it as it is, I guess—not that we expect the WLGA to do anything else, of course.

[88] We will move straight into the questions, and I will begin. In your evidence to us in 2008, you stated that a new parenting action plan was not necessary. We have heard some evidence in this review that suggests that some organisations feel that it is necessary. The Deputy Minister thinks that the Families First approach means that parenting support will be integrated through that. Therefore, has your view changed? Do we need a new parenting action plan or will the Families First approach deal with it?

[89] **Dr Llewelyn:** The WLGA's view has not changed. We still subscribe to the view that the existing parenting action plan has done the job of raising awareness and that, because it is such a dynamic policy setting, with the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010, the Assembly Government's child poverty strategy and the Families First initiative, and given the current financial climate, the setting is congested enough as it is and that we need to focus on delivering what is there rather than introducing any further complication or any new ideas. I do not know whether my colleagues would like to add to that.

10.20 a.m.

[90] **Ms Hayward:** It has given us an excellent platform to integrate parenting services into many different agencies within Blaenau Gwent. We sit under core aim 6, and our parenting strategy monitors the actions set. That is due to be reviewed, and we are hoping to launch a new parent and family support strategy in April 2011. The initial parenting action plans have given us the platform to be able to do that.

[91] **Ms Davies:** I agree that we need to continue to integrate parenting through the planning processes that we have around the single plan of the children and young people partnerships. We are looking to combine our children and young people partnerships with health, social care and wellbeing partnerships plans and strategies, because parenting is not just about children; it is also about working with adults. You could lose some of that integration by having a separate parenting action plan.

[92] **Helen Mary Jones:** Arising more from the film than from that answer, I have a specific question to you, Shelley, though Tania and Chris may have a view as well. One of our witnesses has put a concern to us that whereas the Incredible Years programme worked very well at the beginning, unless people delivering the programme are regularly and effectively supervised—especially when you have a range of professionals and parents working to the Incredible Years programme, as you clearly have in Powys—there is a risk that the programme could become diluted or skewed. You clearly have a very strong co-ordinated approach in Powys, so can you tell us how you avoid that from happening? If Chris and Tania want to chip in, they are welcome.

[93] **Ms Davies:** Dr Sue Evans, whom you saw in the DVD, is our local mentor. She often goes to Seattle to become qualified as a mentor and accredited leader in the various programmes that we offer. She offers supervision to all the people who deliver programmes to ensure that we have fidelity. She is very strong on the fidelity of the programme so that it is not diluted. It is about how we develop the workforce. As the workforce becomes more experienced in delivering the programmes, we get them accredited as peer coaches, which means that we are growing our own. It is critical, however, to have the mentor employed

locally to start that ball rolling, because the fidelity of the programme is everything.

[94] **Ms Hayward:** With regard to the Incredible Years programme, we get our mentorship from Judy Hutchings at the moment. They are hoping for me to be trained as a mentor within Blaenau Gwent. It is quite a long process, and we are in the process of starting that. I agree that programme fidelity is essential, so that we can achieve the outcomes for children and families. The second the programme starts to become diluted, we do not achieve the outcomes that were originally set.

[95] **Ms Davies:** In addition to that, when you deal with high-level strategic managers, it is often quite challenging to keep promoting a programme that seems quite resource-intensive. There is an argument for strategic managers to be trained themselves. I went through the training myself, and that helped me to understand why this programme has to be delivered in a certain way. So, we are encouraging more of our strategic managers to get trained to help with that facilitation.

[96] **Helen Mary Jones:** That supervisory element is obviously very important. Chris, do you have a view as to what extent supervision is available to people delivering the Incredible Years programme across Wales?

[97] **Dr Llewelyn:** To be honest, I do not have anything to add to what has been said. However, what I would say is that, in a more general sense, it is an issue that crops up now and again in respect of service provision more generally and education in particular. CPD is a key element of delivering whatever the initiative may be, whether it is the foundation phase or whatever we are looking at. Sometimes, it is one of those areas that are easy to neglect, but CPD in whatever form is a crucial part of delivering any initiative or intervention.

[98] **Eleanor Burnham:** I always ask this. Could you remind any listeners or people watching of what 'CPD' means?

[99] **Dr Llewelyn:** It means continuing professional development.

[100] **Helen Mary Jones:** Eleanor is waging a one-woman war against jargon, of which we all immensely approve, obviously.

[101] **Eleanor Burnham:** We have so many people listening and watching, it is incredible. Can you clarify which authorities in Wales—particularly authorities in north Wales, as I am a bit parochial—use the Incredible Years programme? I think that the programme is phenomenal. I am also grateful to you for showing the DVD. If you do not know which authorities, could you let us know?

[102] Fel yr ydych wedi dangos, mae cymorth rhianta wedi'i brif ffrydio ar draws gweithgarwch awdurdodau lleol, a chaiff ei ddarparu drwy'r cynlluniau plant a phobl ifanc gan ddefnyddio cyllid Cymorth a'r grant mudiadau plant a theuluoedd. O gofio'r ansicrwydd a grybwyllwyd gennych yn gynharach ynghylch cyllid Cymorth i awdurdodau lleol, a ydych yn pryderu o gwbl am ddarpariaeth gwasanaethau rhianta yn y dyfodol, a sut yr ydych yn credu yr aiff pobl i'r afael â'r broblem hon? As you have demonstrated, parenting support has been mainstreamed across the work of local authorities, and is delivered through the children and young people's plans using Cymorth funding and the children and family organisations grant. Given the uncertainty that you mentioned earlier over Cymorth funding for local authorities, do you have any concerns about the future provision of parenting services, and how do you think people will address this issue?

[103] **Helen Mary Jones:** We have a slight problem with the sound.

[104] **Eleanor Burnham:** Would you like me to repeat all of that?

[105] **Helen Mary Jones:** No, I will say that it is about the possible effect of the changes in Cymorth funding.

[106] **Eleanor Burnham:** It is about the parenting support that we already have—and thank you very much; that told us absolutely how it is. However, you must be worried about the lack of facilities and financial support for the future. How will you get to grips with all of this, and how can you ensure that this wonderful programme continues to get rolled out?

[107] **Ms Hayward:** The benefit for us in Blaenau Gwent is evident in outcomes. At the moment, we are using TOPSE, which is the tool to measure parents' self-efficacy pre and post intervention. It is showing excellent outcomes for children and families at the moment. We also do six-month dip samples, so we are seeing where the parents are sustaining those levels—they have a level at intervention, and we hope that they keep those parenting skills. The ones that we are doing now are very promising and showing excellent sustainability in the positive parenting skills. The financial uncertainty is very difficult for us, but we just have to ensure that we are delivering evidence-based parenting programmes to support parents and evidence that outcomes are achieved and that these parenting programmes are working and changing families' lives.

[108] **Eleanor Burnham:** I wish I had one when I was a parent.

[109] **Ms Hayward:** It has definitely changed my parenting; that is for sure.

[110] **Ms Davies:** In Powys, we had the Incredible Years programmes running before Flying Start. While Flying Start gave us some additional cash to inject, but the programme was there before. Because of that, we have been quite creative with the funding; we have pooled different strands of funding to spread the risk, if you like, rather than rely on one huge pot of funding to prop it up.

[111] The concern we have locally at the moment with Cymorth changing to the Families First fund is about where the focus of that work will be. If it is restricted to tiers 2 and 3, because we offer our parenting provision through a universal framework, if tier 1 services are not eligible under the new programme, that is where we will see a challenge because parenting cannot operate in isolation. It has to sit within that broader framework to draw families in, to avoid stigma and to ensure that these messages are wrapped around the families no matter where they are, and not just on a course once a week.

[112] **Eleanor Burnham:** I presume that all of this is available through the medium of Welsh.

[113] **Ms Davies:** Yes.

[114] **Helen Mary Jones:** It was rolled out from Bangor, you see, Eleanor.

[115] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning, all of you, and thank you for the DVD, which was fascinating. Children and young people's partnerships have a responsibility to ensure adequate support for parents in their local given area. How well do the children and young people's plans address the needs of disabled parents or the parents of disabled children? Can you provide the committee with any specific examples of good practice among local authorities in Wales?

[116] **Dr Llewelyn:** I will come in first. The position is as you have stated, and it is a

responsibility that children and young people's partnerships and authorities take seriously, and they do everything they can to focus their energies and resources appropriately. My colleagues can probably give specific examples of what happens within their own authorities.

[117] **Ms Hayward:** Currently, we are working with the Blaenau Gwent branch of the National Autistic Society and we are hoping to implement a new programme in January, working with parents with children who are on the autism spectrum. We have also just completed the Incredible Years programme with the parents and the staff at Pen-y-Cwm School, which is our local special educational needs school. So, we come from the staff's expertise on special educational needs to parenting expertise, and we do joint delivery of services. There is a lot more emphasis, particularly for us, on providing services for the parents of disabled children and to parents with disabilities themselves. We have also had parents with severely impaired sight, so we make allowances for their conditions by ensuring that they have things in large print and that we accommodate their needs.

10.30 a.m.

[118] **Ms Davies:** We offer a mixture of groups for parents of children with disabilities, but an awful lot of those parents also access mainstream groups. So, we offer a choice. In a county such as Powys, which is huge, it is quite a challenge to get the critical mass in one place. We find that parents of children with disabilities welcome being able to go to mainstream groups because it starts to normalise some of the things that they are experiencing. They find that they get terrific support from their peers in those groups. So, we offer parents a choice, but because we have taken a whole-systems approach and we have trained the whole workforce, many of the other support services that they are receiving are trained in the Incredible Years programme. They can have the programme in the home. So, if some of these parents find it difficult to get to a group, we can deliver the programme to them individually.

[119] One of the areas that we have identified for development in our next strategic period is parents with disabilities, and particularly learning disabilities. We think that the integrated family support teams will start to address some of that because they will be bringing in adult services. Again, those parents who struggle with group work will still come along, but they will get intensive support at home to back it up. So, it is a whole-framework approach.

[120] **Joyce Watson:** That is excellent. Yes, I know about the sparsity of Powys, since I cover three-quarters of Wales myself, including Powys. Barnardo's Cymru has told us that parents with children between the ages of five and 11 need to be better supported. Do you agree that the needs of parents with children in this age group have been overlooked by local authorities, which have tended to prioritise early years services?

[121] **Ms Davies:** In Powys, because we started prior to Flying Start, we started with the basic programmes, which go up to age 11, so we offer a full range of programmes from 0 to 11. With Flying Start coming through, there has been a focus on the younger age range, but that has not been to the detriment of older children. Over time, you will find that, as we put more and more of the younger children through the programmes, there should be less need among the five to 11 age group. However, we do not exclude them. We know that there is an area for development with parents of teenagers. We offer the Take 3 programme in Powys, which comes through the youth offending service and Barnardo's, but we know that that is an area for additional development in Powys.

[122] **Ms Hayward:** Initially, when we were mapping the needs of the single plan, the five to 11 age range was identified as a gap in services, which is why they looked at the parenting programmes and decided to undertake the Incredible Years programme. We are in a very fortunate position now because we also run the Parentline Plus programmes, so we have lots

of provision for that age range and can tailor programmes to meet the needs of parents. We are also delivering quite a lot in schools with our community-focused schools support worker. She is delivering the Incredible Years programme, and, sometimes, she also does six-week parenting programmes looking at how to get on with the child, encouraging less shouting and more co-operation. Those programmes fit into this age range. A number of other staff have just been trained to deliver the Incredible Years school-age programme. We are quite excited that we will be starting that in January.

[123] **Joyce Watson:** So, those were two examples of how it should be done. How is it being done overall?

[124] **Dr Llewelyn:** I think that it is being done similarly across Wales.

[125] **Jonathan Morgan:** Chris, in your written evidence, you say that all services for parents should remain universal and non-stigmatising. What actions do local authorities need to take to ensure universal services for families are not marginalised given the current financial situation?

[126] **Dr Llewelyn:** I would restate the view that family support services should be universal and non-stigmatising. That is the underlying principle that supports authorities' provision. The difficulty is that, in the current financial climate, there is a tension between the ability of authorities to provide universal services and a more targeted approach. The current financial constraints will increase that tension. Concerns have already been expressed—concerns that you have probably heard elsewhere—about the change from Cymorth to the Families First approach. To be honest, greater clarity has now emerged around Families First. The Deputy Minister has written to authorities twice in the last month or so, outlining how Families First will develop, with next year being a transitional year. Moreover, given that there is greater clarity about the work of the Families First pioneers, authorities are feeling reassured. However, this is all in the detail: how these things develop on an operational level. There is an emerging consensus at the headline level on what the Families First approach is trying to achieve. However, the test is how deliverable it is, what happens over the transitional period and what impact this has on the trade-off between the universal approach and the intervention approach.

[127] **Jonathan Morgan:** At a strategic level, is there a risk that local authorities could view family support services as easy pickings, in the event that administrations are struggling to manage their budgets?

[128] **Dr Llewelyn:** The reality is that all services are at risk and are under review. However, as I said, there is an emerging consensus among authorities in this area and on the Families First approach. Whereas there were initial concerns about the changes to Cymorth, as clarity emerges around Families First, there is more support for it. There is a commitment there on the part of authorities.

[129] **Helen Mary Jones:** Would the other witnesses like to add anything relating to their more local perspectives?

[130] **Ms Davies:** I think that the children and young people partnerships are very strong across Wales. They are very clear about what they want to achieve and their planning priorities. It would be challenging for others to see that funding as 'easy pickings'. We are quite clear about where we want that funding to go. However, it is important to recognise that, as we try to push families down the tiers to make sure that we are meeting their needs at the lowest level possible, we need a universal infrastructure to be able to do it. Otherwise, we will end up with very targeted and stigmatised services that some parents cannot access. To support that early intervention and prevention, we must have tier 1 and tier 2 investment and

infrastructure.

[131] **Helen Mary Jones:** Would you like to add anything to that, Tania?

[132] **Ms Hayward:** We have implemented the common assessment framework in Blaenau Gwent, and the team-around-the-child model. We are seeing the referral of more and more families with very complex needs. There has been a natural transition into more targeted services, which is interesting.

[133] **Helen Mary Jones:** You made the point that having the evidence to show the difference that parenting makes may perhaps help to keep resources in the programme.

[134] **Jonathan Morgan:** Why do local authorities still need to sign separate personal information-sharing disclosures with each voluntary organisation and Government department? Could this be improved without putting at risk the confidentiality of the child or children?

[135] **Dr Llewelyn:** I will kick off, and then my colleagues will come in. This is an issue of informed consent. Ideally, we would like the most efficient and streamlined process possible for parents or carers to sign their consent. However, things can only be done if consent is given in each instance in an informed way. There is a trade-off between the danger of confusion or information overload against the advantages of a streamlined and efficient process of consent. I think that my colleagues will also have a view on this.

10.40 a.m.

[136] **Eleanor Burnham:** This always confuses me. As an Assembly Member, the first thing that I do is get a data protection consent letter sent to a constituent for them to sign, which then gives me possibilities. I can pick up the phone to talk to a stakeholder in the situation, but there is always a hassle. Why can we not streamline the process when we know that the ultimate goal is to maintain at the centre the confidentiality of the person for whom you are working? Why is this so much hassle? How are we going to overcome this? It seems to me that people lurk or hide behind this so that they do not have to share information with the person who has obtained the consent of the person who we are all helping.

[137] **Helen Mary Jones:** I can see that that is striking a chord with you, Tania.

[138] **Ms Hayward:** Yes, definitely. We get quite a lot of resistance from professional agencies, which is sometimes to the detriment of the families. Prior to the implementation of the common assessment framework in Blaenau Gwent, many agencies were working within the silo approach. The CAF and the team-around-the-child model have now been implemented and the family sign one consent form, consenting to the sharing of historic and current information. The process of sitting as a multi-agency panel, which includes the police and social services, is explained to them. Therefore, they are quite aware of the situation: they give their consent once and fill out one assessment. When families work with lots of different agencies, they fill out lots of different assessments. If they have complex needs, it is particularly difficult for them to have to relive it, whereas the beauty of the team-around-the-child model is that there is one assessment, one consent and one-team-around-the-child is implemented, so that all the agencies are working together.

[139] **Helen Mary Jones:** Before I bring in Jonathan Morgan and Joyce Watson who would like to ask some supplementary questions about that, are you in a position to stay with us for an extra five or 10 minutes, and are Members content that we cut the private session down a bit?

[140] **Eleanor Burnham:** Five minutes.

[141] **Helen Mary Jones:** I promise that we still have the clear aim of getting us all out of here by 11 a.m..

[142] **Ms Hayward:** Could I just add to that?

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

[144] **Ms Hayward:** We have just implemented the personal information sharing protocol, which overarches our team-around-the-child and it is a document for all the professional agencies to use as a framework.

[145] **Jonathan Morgan:** I was just wondering, Tania, about what you are doing in Blaenau Gwent with regard to single disclosure and trying to get a streamlined system, where you say, 'You sign this and therefore you are consenting to information being shared between organisations'. That sounds terrific, but does that happen anywhere else?

[146] **Ms Davies:** It happens in Powys.

[147] **Jonathan Morgan:** Okay, it happens in Powys, but it is not something that is being rolled out elsewhere.

[148] **Dr Llewelyn:** Can we get back to you on that?

[149] **Jonathan Morgan:** Yes, that would be very useful.

[150] **Helen Mary Jones:** Time and time again, over the last four years, this committee has come across information sharing as a major problem. If it has been solved somewhere, we should be able to solve it everywhere.

[151] **Ms Davies:** I just want to add that we still get the odd challenging occasion. There are still issues around training for staff who have historically worked in a certain way, and it is a matter of overcoming barriers for individual members of staff. Information technology systems are a big barrier that we have not solved, as regards sharing our electronic information with others. The protocols and systems are there, but barriers exist with regard to IT and the odd individual who needs some extra training.

[152] **Lynne Neagle:** How successful do you think the family information services have been in relation to overcoming the stigma associated with parents asking for parenting support and advice?

[153] **Ms Davies:** Powys has had quite a different model to family information services. We go through a networked approach. Having one place for people to come to would not work because Powys is so big. FIS outreach is everybody's job. Therefore, everybody needs to ensure that they are aware of what is going on and what is available to families, and that they are communicating that information. That principal philosophy has been very effective.

[154] **Ms Hayward:** We have a very successful family information service in Blaenau Gwent. For example, when we deliver information on parenting, we design a leaflet, which goes on the FIS website. A lot of parents ring up for support and FIS can direct them to the appropriate group or get them to ring me. We also have a website. We work in partnership; we are fortunate enough to be a multi-agency team. So, there is always a lot of awareness raising of the family information service in Blaenau Gwent, with things like outreach events and so on. So, lots of families know that it is available.

[155] On the stigma issue, we do not advertise parenting programmes as ‘parenting’ programmes. We mention things like ‘the Incredible Years programme’, which we talked about earlier, and programmes such as ‘Getting on with your child’ and ‘Less shouting—more co-operation’, and, in the run-up to Christmas, we will do a Christmas stress-busting programme—

[156] **Helen Mary Jones:** Can I come? [*Laughter.*]

[157] **Ms Hayward:** These programmes are an excellent way of engaging parents without having that stigma of attending parenting programmes.

[158] **Helen Mary Jones:** What you call something is so important. It makes such a difference.

[159] **Dr Llewelyn:** I think that that view is held across all authorities. This again touches on the earlier issue of retaining the focus on a universal service—not endangering it, and normalising it as well. Some of the outreach work that is being done achieves that by not appearing to present it as family support.

[160] **Joyce Watson:** Dr Llewelyn, you said that most authorities take that approach. Is it possible for us to have a quick note on which authorities do not take this approach? You might find that all authorities take this approach, which would be fantastic.

[161] **Dr Llewelyn:** Yes, that is fine.

[162] **Helen Mary Jones:** That is a good suggestion, Joyce. Thank you. Lynne?

[163] **Lynne Neagle:** How successful have local authorities been in raising awareness of positive parenting among the general public in Wales?

[164] **Ms Davies:** It is an ongoing growth area. Given that we are pushing it through schools, our programmes, parent and toddler groups and health initiatives, people are exposed to it when their children are younger. So, it is developing and will continue to grow.

[165] **Ms Hayward:** We are fortunate that many different agencies within the borough are to be trained to deliver the Incredible Years programme, which is very positive. Parenting is very high on the agenda of our local authority, which is demonstrated in the local plans and the strategies that are in place.

[166] **Helen Mary Jones:** Chris, do you want to add anything to that?

[167] **Dr Llewelyn:** It is a responsibility that all authorities and all children and young people partnerships take on board.

[168] **Eleanor Burnham:** Peidiwch â phoeni os ydych eisoes wedi ateb y cwestiwn hwn. Pwy sy'n gyfrifol am sicrhau y caiff yr holl fentrau i godi ymwybyddiaeth ynghylch dulliau rhianta cadarnhaol a chynnwys rhieni yn addysg eu plant eu tynnu ynghyd a'u gweithredu'n effeithiol? **Eleanor Burnham:** Do not worry if you have already answered this question. Who is responsible for ensuring that all the initiatives to raise awareness of positive parenting and to involve parents in their children's education are brought together and implemented effectively?

[169] I suspect that this question is about all authorities. I agree with Joyce, and we have asked before, could we have a note on which authorities take this approach?



[170] **Ms Davies:** It is the responsibility of the children and young people partnerships and everyone who sits within that.

[171] **Eleanor Burnham:** In every local authority?

[172] **Ms Davies:** Yes.

[173] **Eleanor Burnham:** That is why it is more important than ever for us to know which local authorities are engaged in this.

[174] **Ms Hayward:** With regard to us in Blaenau Gwent, again at an operational level, we did a Father's Day event. Nothing had been done specifically for fathers in Blaenau Gwent before, so we did that. Following that event, we identified two parent champions, who have both been through the Incredible Years programme, and now sit on our partnership board.

[175] **Eleanor Burnham:** Are they volunteers?

[176] **Ms Hayward:** Yes, they are volunteers. They are both parents, from different families. They are now our parent champions and authorities can build on that.

[177] **Eleanor Burnham:** Were they parents who had come to you for support?

[178] **Ms Hayward:** Yes.

[179] **Eleanor Burnham:** That is even better.

[180] **Ms Hayward:** They have come from the grass-roots level.

[181] **Joyce Watson:** May I ask a quick supplementary question, because I know that time is short, but we are obviously keen on this agenda? You mentioned parent champions, and we have champions for equality, children and old people in local authorities, but the thought that was going through my head before you mentioned them was whether we had champions for this, because this is about getting the political support and direction from each local authority. Do you think that there would be any value in each of the 22 local authorities nominating a political champion to ensure that good parenting is taken seriously, monitored and, possibly, funded by the local authorities, now and in the future?

10.50 a.m.

[182] **Ms Hayward:** That would be an excellent idea.

[183] **Ms Davies:** The tension would be around children and young people's political leads. Would those two sit together? Should that not be their role and should it not be made explicitly their role or should it sit separately? That would be a potential issue.

[184] **Dr Llewelyn:** The WLGA would be more inclined to support the latter view. It is one of those issues that need to be looked at, to see what evidence there is that it would add value to the system. The process, as it works at the moment, relies on a dispersed leadership within the system. For example, schools take their responsibility seriously. The approach of initiatives such as the school effectiveness framework is about dispersed leadership and responsibility being taken at different levels by different stakeholders. You would not want to dilute that. Equally, you would not want to dilute the role that the children and young people's partnerships play. That would be the concern.

[185] **Joyce Watson:** All that I was saying was that, if you have a political lead and that it is the authorities—along with others—that will be providing large amounts of the budget, it might have to drive that. I was not suggesting that they suddenly became the lead bodies in excellent partnerships; I was talking about the monitoring that goes on in local authorities and also the engagement of, and knowledge building among, their peers in those local authorities. That is where I was coming from.

[186] **Helen Mary Jones:** Perhaps we can give that some consideration when we come to the—

[187] **Joyce Watson:** I feel a recommendation coming on. To move swiftly on, the Welsh Government's policy in relation to parenting has now moved beyond the parenting action plan. Do you have a view on the Government's new integrated family approach? Are you satisfied that the specific needs of parents will not be lost in that wider family approach?

[188] **Dr Llewelyn:** I shall kick off. As I mentioned earlier, there is growing support for the Families First approach and a more integrated approach within local government. The concern, as I mentioned earlier, is about the trade-off between universal and targeted services, which would be that the needs of the universal aspect of the service are not lost at the expense of the targeted service.

[189] **Ms Hayward:** In Blaenau Gwent, as I said, we are already moving towards multi-agency working. We find it very effective. The recommendations of serious case reviews are suggesting multi-agency and integrated working; we are already implementing that in Blaenau Gwent, which is a positive move forward.

[190] **Ms Davies:** It can only enhance the service. I do not think that parenting will get lost in that. The fact that you have a holistic perspective when you look at the needs of families means that parenting is a part of that. So, I do not think that it will get lost.

[191] **Helen Mary Jones:** I thank all three of you on the committee's behalf. Hearing directly from the people involved in the work on the front line has been incredibly useful. We need the national, strategic and overall view from the WLGA, but the specific local examples of how you can make things work have been very valuable and I am sure that they will inform our recommendations.

10.54 a.m.

### **Cynnig Trefniadol Procedural Motion**

[192] **Helen Mary Jones:** Cynigiau fod **Helen Mary Jones:** 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.*

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

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.  
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10.54 a.m.  
The public part of the meeting ended at 10.54 a.m.*