

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau

The National Assembly for Wales
The Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee

Dydd Mercher, 7 Mehefin 2006
Wednesday, 7 June 2006

Cynnwys
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Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi 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 Cynulliad yn bresennol: Peter Black (Cadeirydd), Christine Chapman, Jeff Cuthbert, Jane Davidson (y Gweinidog dros Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau), William Graham, Denise Idris Jones, Janet Ryder, Owen John Thomas.

Swyddogion yn bresennol: Alan Lansdown, Pennaeth yr Is-adran Anghenion Ychwanegol a Chynhwysiant; Steve Marshall, Cyfarwyddwr yr Adran Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau.

Eraill yn bresennol: Elaine Allinson, Estyn; Anne Greagsby, Comisiwn Hawliau Anabledd Cymru; Steve Hole, Rheolwr Cymorth Busnes, Cymdeithas Gyrfa Cymru; Susan Lewis, Prif Arolygydd Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru, Estyn; Sylvia Lindoe, Estyn; John Llewellyn, Prif Weithredwr, Gyrfa Cymru Gogledd Orllewin; Alun Thomas, Cyfarwyddwr Dros Dro, Comisiwn Hawliau Anabledd Cymru; Jayne Tilley, Rheolwr Gweithredol Anghenion Addysgol Arbennig, Gyrfa Cymru Morgannwg Ganol a Phowys.

Gwasanaeth y Pwyllgor: Steve George, Clerc; Ruth Hatton, Dirprwy Glerc.

Assembly Members in attendance: Peter Black (Chair), Christine Chapman, Jeff Cuthbert, Jane Davidson (Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills), William Graham, Denise Idris Jones, Janet Ryder, Owen John Thomas.

Officials in attendance: Alan Lansdown, Head of Additional Needs and Inclusion Division; Steve Marshall, Director of Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Department.

Others in attendance: Elaine Allinson, Estyn; Anne Greagsby, Disability Rights Commission Wales; Steve Hole, Business Support Manager, Careers Wales Association; Susan Lewis, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Training and Education in Wales, Estyn; Sylvia Lindoe, Estyn; John Llewellyn, Chief Executive, Careers Wales North West; Alun Thomas, Acting Director, Disability Rights Commission Wales; Jayne Tilley, Functional Manager for SEN Careers Wales Mid Glamorgan and Powys.

Committee Service: Steve George, Clerk; Ruth Hatton, Deputy Clerk.

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.00 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.00 a.m.*

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datgan Buddiannau Introduction, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

[1] **Peter Black:** I welcome everyone to the Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee. I have a few housekeeping announcements. In an emergency, ushers will indicate the nearest safe exit. Headsets are available for translation and amplification. Ushers can explain to members of the public how to operate them for those who are unclear. Members may wish to note that the simultaneous translation is available on channel 1, while channel 0 is the floor language. So, if you just want the amplification, use channel 0. I ask everybody to switch their mobiles, BlackBerrys and any other electrical devices off completely. Even if you leave them on silent, they interfere with the microphones and the transmission.

[2] We have not had any apologies but I note that we invited Rhodri Glyn Thomas, who is Chair of the Health and Social Services Committee, to attend for the items on special educational needs, but the Health and Social Services Committee is also meeting today as it has brought its meeting forward, so Rhodri will be unable to attend.

[3] As there are no apologies, there are no substitutions. I invite Members to make declarations of interest under Standing Order No. 4.6.

[4] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I would just like to note for when we come to receive evidence for the special educational needs review that, as I have mentioned before, I am a governor of Trinity Fields Special School in Ystrad Mynach.

[5] **Peter Black:** Does anybody else have an interest to declare? I see that they do not.

9.01 a.m.

Adroddiad y Gweinidog Minister's Report

[6] **Peter Black:** I invite the Minister to make a brief introduction.

[7] **The Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (Jane Davidson):** I am pleased to present my report to the committee. It covers specific areas identified by Members, ongoing programmes of work and issues of current interest. You will wish to note that item 1 on the Estyn survey of vetting procedures in schools and item 2 on the strategic framework for economic development and lifelong learning with the construction sector, have been brought forward from my last report at the request of Jeff Cuthbert, as we did not get the opportunity to discuss them last time.

[8] I am sure that Members will be delighted that, yesterday afternoon, the University and College Union agreed to a pay increase of 13.1 per cent over three years, following a meeting with the employers in London, and will now ballot members on that, with a recommendation that they accept it. The deal involves an independent review of pay in the third year. The industrial action was suspended as of midnight last night and I will be issuing a Cabinet written statement later today.

[9] **Peter Black:** Does anyone have any questions to ask on this specific issue before we move on to the written report?

[10] **Janet Ryder:** I thank the Minister for the introduction to the statement—[*Inaudible.*]

[11] **Jane Davidson:** The statement that I will issue today will be specifically on issues around the pay dispute. I have met the vice chancellors and principals of the higher education institutions, the National Union of Students and the representatives of the University and College Union, both those from what were previously NATFHE and the Association of University Teachers until the beginning of the month. All felt confident that if an agreement could be put in place by early this week, the situation would be fully retrievable. I will keep committee members updated on this but we have talked to all the institutions and, at present, we feel confident that the third-year students, who are the students that we all have the greatest interest in, namely those who will graduate this year, will be properly looked after. We will continue to update the committee on that.

[12] One of the reasons that the pay dispute happened at this time was the substantial extra investment from Government that has gone into higher education. You know that, in Wales, we took decisions to put in a supplementary income stream of £33.5 million, so there is substantial extra investment in the system. The pay deal is considered affordable by the vice chancellors across the whole of the United Kingdom, with the additional Government investment, and the third year involves an independent review of pay so that the affordability of the deal can be tested and everyone can be satisfied that the pay deal is operating appropriately.

[13] **Peter Black:** I remind Members that there is no need to press the buttons on the microphones. If you do, you switch the microphone off and then it needs to be reset. They should come on

automatically, but there may be a five or 10 second delay. You need to be aware that of delay, because if you start speaking before the microphone comes on, you will upset the record of these proceedings.

[14] The first item on the Minister's report is Estyn's survey of vetting procedures in schools. Do Members have any questions on this?

[15] **Janet Ryder:** I appreciate that Jeff would like to move on to the next item, but this is a considerably important item and one that keeps recurring under many different issues. There are other references to similar issues later in the Minister's review.

[16] The report itself points out several overall unsatisfactory issues. How will the Minister respond to those, particularly with reference to checking that teachers are registered with the General Teaching Council for Wales? It is pretty obvious that all schools should be checking that teachers are registered with the General Teaching Council for Wales, but what procedures will the Minister put in place to ensure that they do and that they check adults, other than teachers, who may have access to children on the school site? That refers to something that comes up later in the Minister's report, but that was the main finding in that report and I would like to know what the Minister is doing about that.

[17] Recommendation 11 in that report states that you

'should issue clear guidance to schools and LEAs on the actions they should take when they receive information that casts doubt on the suitability of existing staff or prospective employees. This guidance should draw attention to the need to observe locally agreed safeguarding procedures.'

[18] There are new guidelines that we will discuss later, but does the Minister think that those guidelines cover that recommendation or does she take it as a further recommendation for further guidelines to be issued?

[19] **William Graham:** Is the Minister confident that people with a criminal record have been incorrectly identified as being crime-free?

[20] **Peter Black:** I think that there is also a particular concern about the non-teaching staff, as Janet has already mentioned, and the fact that some schools seem to be taking comfort in the fact that those non-teaching staff were having supervised contact with children and were not unsupervised. This is about building trust with children and someone in that position could build trust in that supervised environment and then contact that child outside the school environment. It is important that we put guidance in place for all schools to be clear that anyone in contact with children should be subject to those checks.

[21] **Jane Davidson:** Procedures to check teachers are registered—there is an obligation to do that at the moment, which I am sure that all committee Members fully accept. The legislation that we passed recently on new teachers coming through the system for the first time—looking at that registration and Criminal Records Bureau checks—will mean that we bottom-out that issue successfully for the future. When I wrote to schools on 24 January—and you will remember that this survey took place not long after I had written to all schools in Wales—we reminded them of all the current statutory guidance, legislation and regulations that are in place. Certainly when I give my formal response to this report, which I wanted to do after we had had an opportunity to discuss it in committee today, I am keen to look at ways in which we can offer further guidance in terms of ensuring that all schools and all local authorities operate consistent practices. It was quite interesting to note in this report that the chief inspector fully accepts that all schools arrange for enhanced CRB checks to be carried out, confirm the applicant's identity before appointment, ensure the take-up of written references, confirm that supply staff have been subject to CRB checks, and that schools and LEAs follow guidance in respect of CRB checks and professional and

character references. It is also accepted that almost all headteachers had a generally clear understanding of their responsibilities, and awareness of the appropriate circulars. However, we also know that the application of some of those issues is not as consistent as we would like. We will go on to the whistleblowing policy a little later in my Minister's report; we made an agreement with the school workload advisory panel that we would put model policies in place in future initiatives of this kind, and therefore we can get a consistency across Wales in doing so. I will be looking to work with the chief inspector where there is a need for further guidance. Some matters are fully in the responsibility of the LEA, and some matters are fully in the responsibility of the school governing body. Therefore, in a sense, people would have to voluntarily sign up to any guidance that we offer in those terms, because of the legislative obligations.

9.10 a.m.

[22] The issues around overseas teachers are important. We do not have many overseas teachers—as you will see from the report, most of the schools that were surveyed did not have experience of overseas teachers, and it is not a major issue in that sense in Wales. However, we must be confident that the arrangements are as good as anywhere else in the United Kingdom. There is an agreement between the UK Government and 21 other countries. Overseas teachers are required to have appropriate checks, and people can go back to the country of origin. However, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Bill continues to consider this issue further.

[23] You ask whether I am confident, William. I am confident that the level of public interest in this issue is such that everyone is concerned that they will do the right thing in this context. It is a balance, because no system could ever manage to accommodate every person who had any access to any school. The point is to ensure that those people who have access to children, and particularly any kind of unsupervised access, are properly checked.

[24] Peter mentioned non-teaching staff. I have previously given a commitment that we will bring regulations to ensure that all the school workforce, not just teaching staff, will be covered by the CRB mechanisms. We are due to bring that to you shortly, so that we will be delivering on that commitment.

[25] **Peter Black:** Is there a timetable for those regulations, and are they statutory regulations?

[26] **Jane Davidson:** They will be statutory regulations.

[27] Finally, some of the things that we will do will be dependent on the passage of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Bill. One key issue that Gwenda Thomas identified in her report has been identified previously by the children's commissioner, and we have discussed in committee whether all school governors should go through a CRB check. We have no primary legislative opportunity at present to ensure that all school governors go through a CRB check. However, you will remember that we issued regulations last October, where we were clear that all school governors should be asked to indicate their willingness to go through a CRB check; if they were not willing, they could be removed from the governing body. So we have started that process. We want school governors to work closely with the schools that they represent—they have such an important voluntary input. A little later we talk about the code of conduct that Governors Wales has put in place, with our strong support, in terms of the high standards that we expect governors to deliver in this context.

[28] **Peter Black:** I welcome Denise back to the committee—I assume that you are substituting for Irene.

[29] **Denise Idris Jones:** Yes, I am; thank you.

[30] **Peter Black:** The second item on the Minister's report is the strategic framework for economic development and lifelong learning within the construction sector in Wales.

[31] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I am grateful that this has been brought forward. As I said during the discussion on the Minister's report at our last meeting, we do not often deal with skills training issues to the same degree as we do pre-16 education. While that may be understandable, it is not necessarily right. I too attended the event on 30 March, or at least the evening dinner. I presented an award to Cowlin Construction Ltd, which is a leading construction firm, for its attitude towards skills training, particularly for young apprentices, and the ongoing development of its employees. During my very short speech in making that award, I made the point that I looked forward to the day when we would celebrate the achievement of NVQs and modern apprenticeships to the same degree as we celebrate the achievements of GCSEs and A-levels. That is a long-term perspective, but nevertheless I believe it to be true, and it seemed to be well-received by the audience at the event. It is something that I would like us to work towards.

[32] I recently met with the Construction Industry Training Board at its request, so that it could let me know its strategy in terms of wanting to engage with us and employers, in particular, to ensure that skills training was at the top of the agenda. The CITB felt, as I do, that this marries-in well with our commitment to the 14-19 learning pathways to provide vocational opportunities where it is right for young people to gain those experiences. The CITB was particularly concerned about opportunities in construction and engineering, and it works closely with other engineering awarding bodies such as SummitSkills and the Science, Engineering, Manufacturing and Technologies Alliance to try to ensure that there is a joined-up approach. I am sure that the Minister agrees that, now that the merger is in place, and that the WDA and ELWa are in-house, we will be able to move towards a situation that enables us to plan as accurately as possible for meeting our skills needs, ensuring that young people have the right opportunities.

[33] As you know, I was particularly concerned with a local issue in Ystrad Mynach College recently, where a group of welding students found that their course would be curtailed at the end of this year, whereas a number of them expected to go on for at least a further two years to get an NVQ at level 3 in welding. It raises the issue of the importance of ensuring that, where such understandings are given to young people, particularly those who are on youth access courses and who have been failed, for want of a better phrase, by the traditional academic approach, those types of commitments are honoured. As it happens, although Ystrad Mynach College was exploring ways in which it could resurrect the course, it suffered a major blow when the leaseholder of the building in which the welding course was run refused to renew the lease. The college could not run the course. In fairness to the college, it has arranged for those young lads to go to Merthyr Tydfil College to continue with their training as far as possible. There are enormous practical difficulties for some of those young lads, but I accept that the college is probably doing as much as it can under those circumstances.

[34] Nevertheless, during my discussions with SummitSkills, the Welding Institute and SEMTA, it became clear that they are concerned that, up to now, the type of planning and thought that goes into the funding of skills training is perhaps not as good as it should be. This is as much a matter for us as it is for those awarding bodies and employers on the engineering side, and everyone must work together. For example, it was advocated to me that we should be funding courses up to NVQ level 3 in engineering, and not, as I am told happens, up to level 1, then to level 2 and then to level 3. I am advised that the industry would rather recruit young people from the beginning on the understanding that they would work to level 3. I ask you to take that back, Minister, so that you can speak to officials to ensure that there is joined-up thinking between our side, employers and the awarding bodies. As I said, this is as much a matter for them to resolve as it is for us.

[35] **Christine Chapman:** I will make a brief comment first. It is very welcome to see this, Minister, and it is a good opportunity to explore some of the barriers we have faced within construction in terms of stereotypes. Many young people are still put off by industries such as construction, but this is a welcome development because it is a good opportunity to start to find out what the industry can do to attract more young people. We want a diverse range of applicants to construction, because it is also about quality. When looking at the future economy of Wales, we

want quality in this profession, and this is a really good opportunity.

9.20 a.m.

[36] **Janet Ryder:** You talk about introducing a more co-ordinated approach to the planning of learning provision. That, really, was the fundamental job of the community consortia for education and training in different areas. With many CCETs, it was difficult to encourage employers to become involved. You also talk about the development of the sector skills council, and its influence on this. Do you intend to replace the CCETs completely? This was talked about a lot in the 14-19 pathways, so how exactly do you intend to simplify the co-ordination of provision at the 14-19 level? Will you simplify it down to one group? If so, what will be the construction of that group, and what will be employers' and providers' input? We talked, in the 14-19 pathways, about giving them some form of financial influence, to make those groups more influential. What impact will this have on the development of the 14-19 pathways? Do you intend to work with the construction industry, allowing those 14-year-olds who want to be involved in the industry to do so from the age of 14? In that case, what provision, care and support will you put in place for them?

[37] **William Graham:** Chair, I am grateful to you for allowing us to come back yet again to what is clearly an important item of discussion. Also, I express my gratitude to Jeff for taking up this matter, which I brought to this committee. It is sad that it had to be brought up by Members before the college realised that it had to provide an adequate provision for that welding course. Also, I congratulate the Minister on making the realities of this so important, particularly with regard to construction.

[38] The Leitch review states quite clearly:

'Today over 70 per cent of our 2020 workforce has already completed their compulsory education.'

[39] It is a frightening prospect, in some ways, and we must look more closely at how these skills are developed. This is slightly controversial, perhaps, Minister, but do you intend to encourage any of the larger firms in the private sector to sponsor relevant specialised courses?

[40] **Peter Black:** I have a supplementary question to that one. I have talked to a number of principals of further education colleges who are concerned at the way in which the national planning and funding framework is panning out in relation to vocational courses. This year, in particular, there seems to be a concern that those courses are being underfunded. I understand that the unit value of those courses has been cut back from the initial projections. The principals to whom I have talked have said that they are finding it difficult to attract adequate finance, and they feel worse off under the funding framework than the sixth forms. They felt that it was meant to address the balance the other way.

[41] **Jane Davidson:** That is a very large number of points to deal with. First, as you will see from the report, it is a framework for a strategy, and the intention is that we will have the strategy in place by the end of March 2007. As we say in the report, it is about the introduction of a more co-ordinated approach to the planning of learning provision.

[42] I have talked to committee before about the fact that ELWa, in looking at a range of particular sectors, identified two as being particularly important. One was the construction sector, because, of course, we have a huge growth in construction. Our commitment to getting schools fit for purpose, the housing quality standard and the building of new hospitals mean a big input in the public sector, but alongside that, we have big private-sector house building going on. However, the other one is care, and I will come to committee on this point in due course, because we have talked before about the need to ensure that we have a similar strategy for planning the whole care sector. The construction industry has warmly welcomed this.

[43] Jeff, you talked about trying to get parity of esteem between modern apprenticeships and GCSEs. Of course, the baccalaureate affords us opportunities to take that parity of esteem forward. Also, the work that Peter McGowan is doing as our vocational skills champion, in looking at the kinds of courses that are available and their applicability and how we can encourage more young people to follow those kinds of courses, will be very important. I know that the committee is allocating some time for Peter to come back after his first year of work to report on those sorts of issues.

[44] The planning and funding system was always designed to ensure that the funding followed the planning, not the other way around. It is a major culture change, if you remember. It is about getting away from the notion of institutions and funding the needs of learners. We have said all the way through that this is not, in any way, a sectoral approach that either favours colleges or favours sixth forms. Members of this committee were concerned that it would have a negative effect on sixth forms and that it would benefit colleges. For all those in the committee that was chaired by Cynog Dafis originally, it was about getting a fair system. All courses have been allocated weightings, which are being discussed in full with the sector. Those weightings are considered to be fair across the piece, although they will obviously have implications for individual deliverers because they will change the amount of funding allocated for individual courses. However, they have been fully discussed, and as we take this system forward—it is a five-year programme introducing the national planning and funding programme by 2010—we are always happy to look at ratings. For example, in terms of the Welsh language, that weighting was changed when people were concerned that it was not sufficient in the initial allocations. We changed that weighting some two years ago.

[45] When I speak at the Fforwm conference tomorrow, one of the things that I will talk about is the new learning assessment provision work, which is about the priorities for planning for the future. They come through from the regional statements of needs and priorities. These are very important because this is beyond the individual community consortium for education and training. It is about bringing whole regions together and looking at where their priorities might be. As you might expect, in north Wales, issues around the air industry—particularly the needs of Airbus—will appear in a way that they would not appear in west Wales. So, you have to have those kinds of separate approaches. For example, the needs in terms of looking at supporting the permanent jobs that will be created by LNG will come up in west Wales and not in south Wales. If we were as successful as we all want and hope to be in terms of the big bid to the Defence Aviation Repair Agency for the defence training academy, it would then become a major issue in terms of regional statements of needs and priorities in south Wales. Those will actually influence the priorities in terms of what courses are put on by the further education sector from 2007 onwards. We will get a much better match, and the planning and the funding will be more aligned with each other.

[46] The point about doing the work on the construction industry now—because construction and the built environment, which would include welding, is identified in the learning assessment provision report, which will be available tomorrow—is that we can then look very clearly at what needs there are in any part of Wales, and therefore look at ways in which to match those needs. Careers advisers can then advocate to young people what opportunities are available.

[47] The point about progression is very important. As we co-ordinate planning in the system, we are very happy to look at notions of progression. We see the Heads of the Valleys strategy, which Andrew Davies will be launching fairly soon, as a real opportunity here.

[48] On welding, you have been a very strong advocate of the students who undertake welding courses at Ystrad Mynach college. I think that it has been of concern that, although the college would have liked to have kept the welding course going in its current form for longer, it was unable to do so because of the leasehold arrangements off campus and the fact that the landlord refused to extend the lease on the premises. However, it is also important to say that the regional statements of needs and priorities do pick up what is needed in the individual areas. Student places

on courses also demonstrate that. Enrolments to the welding course in Ystrad Mynach have declined hugely in recent years. There were 46 students on the course in 2000; 40 in 2001; and 20 in 2005, of which only five were full time. As you know, the college is making arrangements for all those who are on the full-time or part-time day courses to be transported at the college's expense in terms of taking alternative opportunities at Merthyr Tydfil College and the Rhymney campus. We are also looking at those who want to obtain the next level of qualification, which is currently being negotiated with Merthyr Tydfil College, Coleg Glan Hafren and Coleg Gwent, in terms of welding and fabrication provision.

9.30 a.m.

[49] Chris's point about quality is hugely important. We have talked about work-based learning on a number of occasions in this committee, and we have made the commitment that courses that do not pass the Estyn inspection under the common inspection framework at a satisfactory standard at least will not be funded beyond 2008. We must continue to drive up that standard, and there is a lot of support in the system now in terms of taking that forward.

[50] On Janet's point about CCETs, as I said, they were part of the process of providing input to the regional statements of needs and priorities, and the consultation that is out now on the issue around delegation is looking at the future of CCETs. However, there seems to be strong support, from both the anecdotal evidence and the early responses to that consultation, which is open until the end of July, for CCETs operating at the sub-regional level rather than the local authority level, and for the need for the 14-19 networks to operate at the local authority level. We will bring proposals to you in the autumn once that consultation has been completed.

[51] The issue around 14-19 learning pathways is absolutely crucial in this sense. What excites the construction industry is the notion that we can look at ways of introducing pre-16 industry standard modules, for example. Chris and her team, who are leading the project board on 14-19 learning, will be looking at issuing health-and-safety guidance, because, as the Estyn report noted, the arrangements in terms of those under the age of 16 and those over the age of 16 in the colleges were not satisfactory in all the colleges surveyed. Therefore, Chris is ensuring that she and her team issue guidance on those issues in the early part of the autumn. There is also substantial additional funding—£8 million this year in terms of 14-19 learning, and £32 million in 2007-08, which will contribute towards the delivery of the 14-19 agenda.

[52] On William's point, the Leitch report stated that 70 per cent of the current workforce will be in the workforce in 2020, and previous figures would suggest that 80 per cent of those in employment now will still be in employment then. That is why the work-based learning elements are so important here. One of the big areas for development is the modern apprenticeship. We have all-age modern apprenticeships in Wales that go up to NVQ level 3, and we must have them in the public and private sectors. The big firms in the private sector have been really effective in doing that, particularly in terms of the hands-on engineering-related approaches, and we are keen to promote them far more widely. For example, we are actively looking at the moment at the Assembly taking on modern apprenticeships. The health service is actively looking at that as well, because these vocational routes that can lead on to further progression are extremely important.

[53] I think that I answered Peter's point in my answer about the national planning and funding system, which is that everyone signed up to the principle of the weightings of courses, and those are then allocated as units within the funding system fairly across Wales in both the school sector and the further education sector. As you know, we put some protection in place in terms of people moving the equality line at the end of the process, and officials are in discussion with colleges at the moment regarding the allocations.

[54] **Peter Black:** Although everyone has signed up to the principles, some principals in particular are finding that it is not working out as they expected. My understanding is that the unit weighting

initially allocated to further education courses has had to be cut back because it would have used up all the funds and more that were available to post-16 education. As a result of that, a number of principals have said to me that the vocational courses are being underfunded by comparison to the more academic courses, and that is a matter of concern.

[55] **Jane Davidson:** The point is that we are operating fairly across the whole system. As I said, officials are in discussion with colleges about the changes. It is also important to say that colleges have an important role in ensuring that they are able to respond to the needs of the economy. That is a fundamental proposition for them, and that is why the learning assessment provision work will be so important, because it will be looking to ensure that where we in this committee and business leaders have determined that there are particular priorities in the economy of Wales to be taken forward, appropriate courses are put on to deal with them. Childcare and early years provision feature in those priority needs.

[56] **Peter Black:** I am meeting some more principals and Fforwm, so, I will get more information in due course, I am sure. Jeff and Janet wanted to come back.

[57] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you for allowing me to come back, Chair. I do not dispute what has been said by the Minister, but I want to push one or two points. I have had discussions with the CITB and the other awarding bodies involved in construction and engineering, and they are very keen to play a full partnership role with us and with industry. Certainly, they have one eye on convergence from next January, when, undoubtedly, addressing the skills gap will be a big issue. I am concerned that, now that ELWa and the WDA are in-house, we should have joined-up thinking and a properly co-ordinated approach towards the skills agenda. Taking welding as a small example, we must ensure, through discussions and encouragement, that we can make our plans on the basis of the most accurate information and understanding.

[58] In the case of Ystrad Mynach college, I accept, as a matter of arithmetic, that the number of enrolments has dropped over the last few years. There is no doubt about that, but in my discussions with the college, the students, the tutors involved and local employers on the matter, there has been dispute as to why that has happened. I will not go into that in great detail, but the fact of the matter is that that has happened and it has not helped. I have urged the students who are currently at Merthyr Tydfil College, continuing with their training, to make the best of it, to get their qualification and to move into welding as competently as they can. I hope that that will be the case for most of them.

[59] Incidentally, the support, particularly in terms of travelling arrangements, is only for this academic year. Hopefully, it will not prove too difficult for arrangements to be made for those young people who want to go on to levels 2 and 3 in the next couple of academic years. However, my main plea is that we ensure now that we are making the right decisions—within limited resources, I accept that—so that funding is fair and appropriate for developing the skills agenda in line with our economic needs.

[60] **Janet Ryder:** You talked about developing a standard module for construction work for the 14-19 age group. I have talked to construction firms in the north-east, and their concern is that they are taking on young people from college who have learned new-build skills. Construction firms, especially if they are small, local firms, are involved with local authorities in repairing houses and bringing them up to the quality standard. It is not new-build skills that those young people need; it is repair skills. Employers do not feel that the young people are learning those skills in the college base. They would like to consider the 14-19 age group much more in terms of the old-style apprenticeships, where the young person learned from older workpeople the skills of the job while they were doing it. How much will this standard module allow that to happen?

[61] **Jane Davidson:** I did not say that it was a standard module; I said that it was an industry-standard module, which is an important difference. The point is that that is something that is

supported by the employers and then utilised, either in a school setting or a pre-16 college setting, to encourage those young people then to go on to apprenticeships. It is something that already happens in Australia; we witnessed it when we went out to New South Wales a few years ago. We know that it is happening in a number of areas in Wales already—young people below the age of 16 are being started on vocational courses that then encourage them to go on to an apprenticeship. It is an industry-standard module. The industry standard will need to be agreed by the employers in any of the industries in this area. It is strongly supported by the construction industry and others.

9.40 a.m.

[62] Jeff, the commitment to the national planning and funding system is about ensuring that the funding follows learners on courses that are appropriate for them, and about encouraging institutions to put on courses that represent the needs of the local economy, and which can drive forward the individual ambitions of learners. As you know, that does not mean that every course in every subject can be delivered in all parts of Wales. However, I can give you a commitment that this agenda is about ensuring that we can develop the appropriate skills to develop our economy in Wales. The opportunity of bringing the Welsh Development Agency and Education and Learning Wales in-house is already paying dividends in those areas. In the short time since both organisations have been in-house, Andrew and I have sat around the table with both groups fairly regularly. I think that dramatic dividends will be paid as a result of this.

[63] **Peter Black:** I would like to move on to the third item of the Minister's report, which is the implementation of recommendation 21.5 of the 'Clywch' report, which relates to whistleblowing.

[64] **Janet Ryder:** The recommendation of the 'Clywch' report was that the Minister should bring forward that guidance within six months of the report being published. We are now three years down the line and we are just issuing the consultation on that guidance. What has caused the delay, and when will that guidance be issued?

[65] **William Graham:** Was the children's commissioner fully consulted, and what recommendations, if any, has he made?

[66] **Jane Davidson:** The important point on this is that, as I said in my initial response on the children's commissioner, we are prepared to consult on best practice guidance to assist governing bodies to put in place whistleblowing procedures for all school staff. However, as I have said to committee before, whistleblowing is another area where the responsibility is an employment matter. The statutory responsibilities for putting whistleblowing policies in place for school staff rest with the LEAs and school governing bodies. That comes from legislation in the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. The Act does not require employers to produce a whistleblowing policy; the Act encourages employers to adopt procedures that promote openness and communication, to provide employees with routes for making internal and external disclosures, and to protect the employee in making such a disclosure. As you know, we went to all local authorities, and all local authorities had a policy in place. We collected those policies, and we have remained in discussion with the children's commissioner's office. We have also put a model policy in place. We are going out to consultation once the translation and printing have been effected; we hope that that will be by the end of this month. We will do a normal 12-week consultation on it, but the view of those who have compiled it is that this is now a best practice document. So, we hope that people will be happy with the model policy that we are putting forward and can, therefore, come back quickly in response to the consultation.

[67] As I have said to committee before, the capacity of the Assembly Government to put in place dramatic numbers of new regulations—as we have done, with our response to the Clywch inquiry—has meant that, where there are no direct responsibilities for the Assembly Government, we have not been able to deliver things that quickly, because we have been absolutely focused, and have delivered, on those areas that are the direct responsibility of the Assembly Government. That

has included complex legislation, including specific Wales-only regulations, as you know.

[68] **Peter Black:** I hope, Minister, that we will have more capacity when we have primary law-making powers after 2007.

[69] **Janet Ryder:** It is slightly concerning to hear the Minister say that her department does not have the capacity to cope with this, because it was not just Clywch that said this; Waterhouse had said it years earlier. The worrying thing has always been that departments in local authorities do not talk to each other, and it is becoming blatantly apparent that the Minister is happy to say that it is somebody else's responsibility. I think that Peter Clarke said it clearly: this needs somebody to take the lead to drive this home. We all would have liked to see it being driven home a lot quicker than it has been. The Minister says in this report, and it says in point 1.7 of the guidelines, that,

'Some local authorities have circulated those policies to the governing bodies of the schools they maintain'.

[70] If some authorities have done so, that means that some have not. Is the Minister prepared to name those authorities that have not, so that we can ensure, by naming them, that they will do so?

[71] **Jane Davidson:** We would reiterate that where the responsibility lies with the Assembly Government, the obligation of our department is to ensure that we deliver as quickly as possible. There is no notion of blaming someone else. You must accept where the responsibility lies. It is convenient for you, as an opposition Member, to say that, although the responsibility lies with the local authorities or the schools, as employers, you want to bring it back to the Assembly Government. However, bringing it back to the Assembly Government does not in any way tackle the fact that the responsibility in law still lies with the employers. It would help if you recognised where the responsibility lies.

[72] From the first, I have always undertaken to make sure that we delivered on all our obligations in terms of the 'Clywch' recommendations. In fact, we were in consultation with the children's commissioner's office before the 'Clywch' report was even published. When there were not direct obligations for us but we accepted the recommendation, because we felt that we had a useful role to play, we would deliver on those as well. This is delivering on that obligation. There is no obligation on any of the employers to use this model policy. However, we hope that by creating a model policy all local authorities will work with us and school governing bodies, and this model policy will become a consistent approach across Wales. The Assembly Government can be tremendously helpful in that context, but it does not mean that we have the legislative responsibility. Others, who have the legislative responsibility, need to exercise it, and we will always offer opportunities to help in that context.

[73] **Peter Black:** We will now move on to special school pilot projects.

[74] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I welcome this statement, particularly in the light of item 2 on skills. I feel strongly that skills training has most certainly a role to play in our special schools and can help to equip a number of those young pupils with the ability to go out to seek employment or further training, which will make a massive difference to their lives. I welcome this and, no doubt, when we receive evidence later this morning on issues of transition for the SEN review, we will return to this matter.

[75] One particular issue that I noted was that, in the first paragraph after the bullet points on special school pilot projects, you referred to delivering,

'services of this nature on a regional basis'.

[76] That means across local education authority boundaries. How supportive is the Welsh Local Government Association of this approach that we are taking?

[77] **Peter Black:** I did note that this scheme is in line with the recommendation in part 2 of the SEN report and I welcome that. Do you want to answer Jeff's question, Minister?

[78] **Jane Davidson:** I think that this is an exciting initiative, because we know that there are superb practices throughout our special schools in Wales. We know, from Estyn inspections, that we deliver extremely high quality special school provision in Wales and we also know, from the SEN report, that some of those skills need to be translated into the mainstream sector and this will do that. Special schools quite often operate across local authority boundaries, and so this very much fits with the 'Making the Connections' agenda and the commitment that we made to Wales-only powers in the Education Act 2002 about the regional delivery of goods and services. This has been warmly welcomed by the special schools and by local authorities.

9.50 a.m.

[79] **Peter Black:** Part 5 is on the Assembly Government's response to the Wales Audit Office school funding analysis. We have a letter from councillor John Davies, who is the lead spokesperson for lifelong learning at the Welsh Local Government Association.

[80] **Janet Ryder:** I will ask the Minister, if I may, about recommendation 1, which asks the Assembly Government to look again at the level of eligibility for free meals and whether it represents the best indicator of deprivation. Should it be shown that that does not represent the best indicator of deprivation and a different mechanism is decided on, how will it affect the schools that are in receipt of the raising attainment and individual standards in education in Wales grant this year, for next year's allocation of funding? Have you warned them, as the money is being distributed to them this year, that it may be for one year only and that their funding may be altered next year? How will that affect their plans?

[81] **Jane Davidson:** On the response to the Audit Committee report, you may remember that when the National Audit Office came before us in committee, I asked the specific question of what it would recommend instead of free school meals, but it was not recommending anything; it was just asking us to consider it. That demonstrates the difficulty of finding the right approaches to looking at proxy indicators for deprivation.

[82] I can make it categorically clear that the one area where free school meals is absolutely the best in terms of delivery is in the RAISE funding and, therefore, the two years' guaranteed funding from the RAISE budget will be based on the free school meal component. Every year, we have looked at statistics that have demonstrated that, for the larger cohorts of children who are eligible for free school meals, they have a direct effect on their educational attainment. That has been said here by Estyn and Ofsted. It is regularly used as an indicator of poverty against which attainment is measured. As the RAISE programme focuses on individual pupils, free school meals, which is an individual pupil mechanism, is by far the best in that context. So, I have no need to tell any schools that there will be a change in their funding, because we have guaranteed the funding for RAISE for at least these initial two years.

[83] However, were we to remain in Government, we would make further guarantees about programmes for social justice, because this side of the table believes that we must address issues around social justice in the school setting. Sue Essex has indicated that she is already considering those issues in her review of the approach to weighing deprivation and sparsity factors in the settlement. This is not an issue with the RAISE funding in particular; this is about the overarching settlement to local authorities and whether there are other mechanisms. As we have said, we have the Welsh index of multiple deprivation, which is a geographical index, and we also have issues about how you weight deprivation. We have the Cymorth funding approach, which weights in favour of communities with very large numbers of single-parent families, with a greater density of children above the average in socially rented housing, for example. So, the Assembly Government uses a number of indicators about what is fit for purpose.

[84] So, we are very happy to look at this issue but, as somebody who is specialised in looking at issues around how to get the right kind of indicators to measure poverty to influence Government programming, you will know that you cannot use one indicator for all elements of programming. If you were looking at geographically distributed poverty, you would use different indicators to those for individually targeted poverty. If you were looking at older people's poverty, you would use different indicators to those for children's poverty. A sophisticated Government would ensure that we use indicators that are fit for purpose. So, we are happy to look overall at the issue of whether free school meals represents a sufficient proxy indicator for the education system or whether we should be using some of the other data at our disposal. However, the RAISE programme, unequivocally, is about individual pupils' achievement. It is there in the title and, therefore, an individual indicator in terms of eligibility is entirely appropriate.

[85] **Peter Black:** Minister, we are dealing with hypotheses here because we are talking about two years hence, but I noticed that this distribution sub-group review will be fed into the 2008-09 settlement. As it happens, that settlement is after the RAISE funding comes to an end and after you review that funding, so it would only be natural that you would take into account the outcome of this review when you review how successful the RAISE funding has been and whether you can refine it for the future.

[86] **Jane Davidson:** We would need to look at how successful the RAISE programme is in delivering the kind of outcomes that we would like to see and how best to deliver that programme in policy terms. We would need to ensure that the funding mechanism followed that.

[87] **Peter Black:** Okay. Are there any more comments on this item? I see that there are none. We will move on to the DWP's incapacity benefit reforms—towns and cities strategy.

[88] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I am very pleased that this item has been included. The Minister and her colleagues should be congratulated on getting the DWP to extend it beyond cities—because we do not have many cities in Wales—and into other urban town areas such as the south Wales Valleys. When will you be able to tell us about the pathfinder area for Wales? I assume that the area has not been identified yet. One place where you might like to go does spring to mind, but I would not dream of being parochial. When can we have an update on that?

[89] **Peter Black:** Janet is next—you will not be parochial either.

[90] **Janet Ryder:** I will not be parochial. I want to ask the Minister about community education, which is fundamental to all of this and is about getting people re-involved in education, thereby helping to influence their career prospects. The community education aspect of further education budgets has been most badly hit given that colleges are facing restrictions in their budgets. This touches on what the Chair said earlier about funding mechanisms for further education. Every college will say that community education is very expensive and often involves lone workers in outreach areas, which are expensive to support. They all recognise that it is perhaps some of the most valuable work that they do, but they are being increasingly forced to look at that provision. To support this strategy, will the Minister look at community education and see how it is being affected through the funding that is being delivered to further education and whether that funding needs to be reviewed?

[91] **Jane Davidson:** I thought for a moment that we were not doing an item on a non-devolved area, the Department of Work and Pensions, but we are. Therefore, the issue before us on this item relates to the opportunity for Wales. It has taken a bit of work to ensure that Wales can be fully incorporated in this strategy. A meeting of stakeholders was held yesterday. Around 60 came from local authorities across Wales and presentations were made by Steve Thomas from the WLGA, Linda Badman from Jobcentre Plus and Simon Wood from the DWP to ensure that everyone knows about the initiative. We are now looking at expressions of interest to meet the DWP's deadline of 3 July.

[92] Our officials have offered to provide help and support to authorities that are considering making a bid. Our expected outcome is that one area will be able to benefit from the programme in the same way as DWP funding has previously enabled, for example, the Pathways to Work project operating in the Heads of the Valleys area and the childcare pilot in Torfaen. Clearly, since this is a multi-agency approach, some aspects of this will undoubtedly be supported by the agendas on lifelong learning, which are operating very successfully in several areas that one would already expect to be targets across Wales. Neath and Port Talbot has its lifelong learning network in terms of community education and the whole of the Gwent area has the very impressive RISE project, which is currently being evaluated. That is very strong on a learner focus and on community education. Those are very strong candidates, I would have thought, for us to look at convergence funding for the future.

[93] **Peter Black:** Are you looking at that area being contained within the local authority boundaries, or would it be cross-boundary?

10.00 a.m.

[94] **Jane Davidson:** The previous DWP projects have sometimes been on an individual local authority basis, and sometimes across boundaries. The issue is around a geographical area that qualifies in terms of the DWP's 1,000 wards in terms of deprivation, and then is an exciting project that demonstrates good multi-agency input. We know already that, for example, the Pathways to Work project spawned the imaginative Want to Work project, which was supported by the Assembly Government and European funding, and which was able to go a step further than the DWP. I am delighted that we are being closely involved in this, because we want to ensure that, whatever project is successful, we are then able to look at lessons that come out of that that we can apply more widely.

[95] **Janet Ryder:** Will the Minister undertake an assessment of the current budget provision for further education and the effect on its provision of community education? It is one of the most difficult areas in further education to track, and it is significantly influenced by the level of European funding that goes into it. Is the Minister tracking the courses that are available now, and the impact that restrictions in the budget are having on those courses, given that they are so vital?

[96] **Jane Davidson:** Community education is delivered by a variety of providers—further education is one, and local authorities are also major providers. As I said in terms of the lifelong learning network, there are a large number of voluntary organisation providers too. I continue to work closely with the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, which represents the interests of all the voluntary and statutory sectors in terms of adult and continuing education in Wales; I had a productive meeting with it a week or so ago. One area where we identified that we need to do more together, for example, was on migrant workers.

[97] **Peter Black:** Item 7 is the Minister's report on the Wales education show 2006.

[98] **Jeff Cuthbert:** To be parochial, I draw Members' attention to the final sentence of the first paragraph:

'This year the showcased Authority was Caerphilly.'

[99] **Jane Davidson:** It performed well.

[100] **Peter Black:** Item 8 is on the Fforwm Iaith. I see that there are no questions on that. Item 9 is the merger of the University of Glamorgan and Merthyr College. There are no questions on that item either. The final item is on the RAISE grant to support the education of looked-after children.

[101] **Christine Chapman:** I welcome this; we have had a lot of evidence about the disrupted lives that looked-after children lead, particularly with regard to education. I may have mentioned

this, but when I was up in Wrexham a few months ago, I met a young man who was in university. He had been in care, and his experience had been pretty traumatic. If we had had this sort of support then, he would have benefited. However, the important point is that he had a person who is helping him throughout the system—I believe that person is a careers adviser. If it had not been for that person, his experience would have been far worse than it was. However, as I said, I welcome this, because we are making real progress.

[102] **Janet Ryder:** This is to be welcomed, but it is stated that it will be distributed by the children's services standard spending assessment formula. Can the Minister confirm whether or not that has a direct correlation to the number of looked-after children in each authority, and whether that also includes the number of children in foster care?

[103] **Jane Davidson:** Annex E spells out exactly what the formula supports. It is a percentage, based on dependent children in overcrowded housing, dependent children in families receiving income support, dependent children in social rented housing, the population aged under 18, and the population aged under 18 in wards with weighted density greater than the Welsh average. The focus of the money will be looking at those young people in years 10 and 11 who are looked after, to improve their opportunity to gain qualifications. Christine's point is crucial, because we know that where looked-after children have managed to achieve, they have done so because there has been a supportive adult who has enabled them to do well within the system. We are also keen to ensure that looked-after children are not moved from school to school, but that we find more opportunities for greater stability. For example, there is some good practice in Swansea and Pembrokeshire that demonstrates that by keeping looked-after children in more stable arrangements, we also give them better opportunities.

[104] So, this is a very exciting programme and I have discussed this with representatives from the Wales leaving care forum, Voices from Care Cymru and the Welsh Local Government Association. It is being channelled through the lead director for children's services so that there is a clear link between the responsibility for looked-after children, rather than through the education route, because it is also about giving those children the right type of personal support to enable them to achieve.

[105] **Peter Black:** For Jeff's benefit, I note that Caerphilly has also done very well out of this grant.

[106] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I was not going to mention it.

[107] **Peter Black:** Thank you for the report, Minister, and I thank everyone for getting through all 10 items in it.

10.06 a.m.

Rhagolwg ar Is-ddeddfwriaeth Secondary Legislation Forward Look

[108] **Peter Black:** Before we move on to the special educational needs review, we will consider the secondary legislation forward look. The additional items in the subordinate legislation programme are highlighted in bold. There is a new item, which is the Adventure Activities (Licensing) (Designation) Order 2006. If Members wish to bring any of these items to committee, please inform the clerk out of committee and we will try to arrange for the relevant time to be made available in committee to discuss the Order in some depth.

10.06 a.m.

Adolygiad Polisi Anghenion Addysgol Arbennig—Rhan Tri: Tystiolaeth gan Estyn Policy Review of Special Educational Needs—Part Three: Evidence from Estyn

[109] **Peter Black:** We will now commence on stage three of our SEN review, which will be short and quick because we will run up against the elections and we need to get it done before that. Estyn is starting the evidence-gathering session, and I welcome back Susan Lewis, the chief inspector of training and education, Elaine Allinson, who is responsible for further education and post-16 training, and Sylvia Lindoe, Estyn's managing Her Majesty's Inspector. As I explained earlier, we invited the Chair of the Health and Social Services Committee to take part in these sessions, but unfortunately that committee is also meeting at the moment, so he has not been able to do that. Hopefully, you will have seen the terms of reference which we agreed at the last meeting, and will be able to address them. I ask you to make a brief presentation and we will go into questions afterwards.

[110] **Ms Lewis:** Thank you for the invitation to contribute to this review. I want to refer to a couple of reports that we have produced. One report was produced in 2004 on preparing learners on independent living skills in FE colleges for transition into employment, training or further education. The purpose of the report was to find out how colleges help learners to make a successful transition to training or work. Last year, we published a further report on supporting FE colleges and work-based learning companies in work with 16 to 19-year-olds with additional learning needs. The second report focused more on young people with moderate learning difficulties, but, as you are aware, many of these learners also have additional learning needs. The young people included in this advice came from mainstream and special schools, and some had statements while others did not. Both reports are available in full on our website.

[111] To draw on the reports and to look at their implications for the development of policy and practice in Wales, first, in terms of making the transition into FE colleges or work-based learning, we see learners who have often received very high levels of support in schools. While that has been helpful for them in providing access to the curriculum, many have become over-reliant on the support and find becoming more independent in a college setting is a considerable challenge. Where schools and colleges have established good link programmes, and where colleges provide focused support and guidance, we see that it helps to ensure a smooth transition into their course. We can give specific examples of places in Wales where that is happening.

[112] However, for many young people a lack of confidence and low self-esteem are major barriers to successful transfer to college. That is true in general, but if you add to that young people with special needs, it can be even more significant, not only for the young person but also for the parents and the carers as well.

10.10 a.m.

[113] There are good examples of where colleges have sought to alleviate this concern by matching the support offered to learners during their first term with the kind of support that they received in school, giving a better kind of transition. That has certainly helped to reassure the young people as well as the parents and carers, who are often anxious about the loss of the special needs statement. With that sort of help, learners can become more secure; the college then gradually weans them off that kind of support, thereby enabling them to become more independent. Pembrokeshire College is an example of where that happens. Once the young person has settled in college, the quality of care and the support that he or she is offered is generally good, and learners recognise and appreciate the quality of the support that they are getting.

[114] Turning to the contribution that those providers—colleges and so on—can make to the lives of the people who attend them, our report highlighted the positive difference that going to college makes to people's lives. For instance, there is the good preparation for independent living and learners becoming more self-sufficient; the planning that goes on with learners and parents and carers for the future; and the friendships and interests that people develop, which will sustain them in later life. Often, these learners are, socially, quite isolated, and therefore colleges that can work well to improve learners' social activities help them to develop and sustain friendships throughout

their lives.

[115] We see young people mainly progressing to other independent living skills courses, or other vocational courses, in other programme areas in the colleges. In independent living skills courses, learners gain credits for their learning and improvements to their basic skills and key skills. However, there are shortcomings. FE teachers do not always take into account prior learning. This can lead to learners being placed on courses at too low a level for them. There are limited opportunities for progression within or from FE for learners who have severe and profound learning difficulties. The independent living skills programme staff do not collect enough data on learners' destinations and their outcomes in employment and training, making it difficult to monitor how well learners are progressing and how well they prepare learners to match employers' needs. That cycle of development is, therefore, inhibited. Generally, there is a lack of health support for learners post-16 in physiotherapy and speech and language therapy, unless the learners attend specialist colleges.

[116] Learners with challenging behaviour do not always receive support to manage their behaviour, and, in colleges and work-based learning, there is limited access to specialist mental health services. In work-based learning, the main focus is on the immediate programme outcomes, such as securing employment or qualifications. Less attention is paid to other needs, such as opportunities for learners to access social services.

[117] Turning briefly to partnership working and its impact on learners' access to wider services and their transition, there are many good examples of close working between providers and external agencies. Careers Wales plays a central role in supporting young people as they move on from school. We have found that, generally, Careers Wales advisers provide good support to learners in schools. They provide guidance and support that helps young people to find appropriate work experience and training, and in progressing to post-16 courses. The introduction of training and development plans under the Learning and Skills Act 2000 has improved communication between careers advisers and colleges. Those plans provide a clear summary of assessments undertaken by different agencies, but—and there is a 'however'—partnerships between post-16 work-based learning providers and Careers Wales are at best uneven. That means that, on occasion, learners do not receive the support that they need. For example, in the Vale of Glamorgan Training Association Ltd, although the partnership arrangements with Careers Wales are satisfactory, the partnership agreement is not used to target those learners who are dropping out of the programme, some of whom have special educational needs. Early guidance from careers advisers on the Skillbuild programme would help to reduce the dropout rate from that programme. In contrast, an example of good communication can be seen in Torfaen County Borough Council's work-based learning provision, where, in preparatory training, a course which supports learners with special needs, there is regular communication with Careers Wales to ensure that, where necessary, learners have additional time to complete their training programmes.

[118] In terms of partnerships with voluntary agencies, colleges generally have good relationships with them. This helps learners to have access to appropriate support. However, again, and in relation to work-based learning, they do not make enough use of voluntary agencies. There is better partnership-working with parents, carers, voluntary agencies, employers, social services and other agencies in colleges and schools than in work-based learning.

[119] In terms of access to health services, overall, when they are in college, learners who need counselling and/or psychological help receive prompt and sensitive support throughout, making use of in-house counselling services and external agencies. Work-based learning providers do not have access to this provision as readily as colleges. Learners who attend special schools often have access to in-house physiotherapy and speech and language therapy support, but post-16 settings other than specialist colleges rarely continue with this. This is due to a lack of arrangements for funding health support, suitability of accommodation and the difficulty with fitting therapies into the college timetable. The situation is no better in work-based learning settings.

[120] Work experience is obviously important in preparing learners to move on to the next stage in their career. Work experience placements are generally of good quality. Colleges make good use of internal work experience placements. Most teachers prepare learners well so that they can get the most out of their work experience but they do not get enough formal opportunities to reflect back on that, when they are back in college, to link it with the college curriculum. There is generally good use of voluntary agencies to help learners who need higher levels of support on work experience. College staff do not always influence employers to improve that experience in the workplace in order to enrich learning, nor do employers always receive enough information about the learners who are placed with them so that they can do their best. Employers are sometimes unsure about arrangements for funding and insuring learners with disabilities in the workplace.

[121] If we talk about the transition from further education to other provision, we found very few learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progressing from college into employment or work-based learning. Most go on to other courses within the independent living skills programme within the same college. Unless they can move into vocational areas, such as construction, catering or hair and beauty, where they can receive vocational training, we see the rate at which learners on those independent living skills programmes progress as being very low. It is a very low progression into paid employment. There are too few opportunities for progression and, therefore, too few of these learners moving onto employment or training.

[122] For learners with more complex needs, there are not enough stimulating sheltered and open employment opportunities in some areas of Wales, especially in rural areas.

[123] In colleges, generally, there is good involvement of learners and their parents to prepare for the next step after college. Colleges, for instance, use advocates to good effect. There is not enough collaborative planning for transition with other agencies, such as social services and voluntary agencies, and there is still not enough engagement with community consortia for education and training, young people's partnerships and local health services in order to give learners the best possible access to appropriate employment, training and support in their local area.

[124] We also found that planning for the learners' transition is weaker in work-based learning than it is in schools or colleges. Transport difficulties can lead to inequalities of access. In many areas of Wales there are not enough opportunities for learners with special needs to live and to work independently. Teachers and parents believe that learners may have their expectations raised while they are in college only to be disappointed later when they leave.

[125] In summary, our report highlights recommendations, many of which are aimed at the providers of services, but there are some strategic recommendations that this committee may wish to consider. They include the Welsh Assembly Government working with the National Training Federation for Wales to develop a standardised approach to the tracking of learners' needs and skills by colleges and work-based learning providers to ensure that there is a better match between learners' skills and employers' needs. That could be tackled as part of the work on the credit and qualification framework for Wales.

10.20 a.m.

[126] The Welsh Assembly Government could develop mechanisms to disseminate good practice in transition for learners with special needs. This could be developed from the good practice that we have found and reported on in those two reports. Another recommendation is improving the availability of specialist health services for learners in colleges and work-based learners. There might be some consideration of developing incentives to encourage a wider range of employers to take on people with special educational needs who would not already be covered by the supported-places scheme. This, I would suggest, could be linked with the current work being undertaken by

the Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills in implementing the work-based learning improvement plan, which the Minister endorsed earlier this year. Another recommendation is providing work-based learning providers with clear guidance about the Welsh Assembly Government's expectations and giving them support to build their capacity in order to meet learners' needs. Improving access to organisations that teach severely disabled learners how to use public transport is also an urgent priority across Wales and urgent attention must be given to improving the transport arrangement for learners in independent skills to help them access more opportunities for progression.

[127] These big, overriding strategic planning issues are quite sophisticated and involve high levels of inter-agency and inter-departmental working and societal attitudes and family expectations are part of the whole equation.

[128] **Peter Black:** Thank you, Susan. A number of Members want to ask questions. We have a bit of time, so we will work through them individually.

[129] **William Graham:** Thank you for that presentation. It was quite alarming in some ways, but we must now focus on those points and come up with recommendations as a committee. You have not mentioned provision for ethnic groups. Every Member is aware of that and probably had questions on it. Some would say that there is a higher incidence of varying social factors. That is very difficult. I have two further points. Everyone will be aware of this, but why is getting people with these disabilities into higher education always a battle, on an individual basis or with family support or the support of friends? I would like your comment on that. My last question is on specialist colleges. You will know about the recommendations that came out in terms of schooling. Do you support the further expansion of specialist colleges, or is their role just about right now in Wales?

[130] **Ms Lewis:** I will take the first issue concerning ethnic minorities. We do not have any separate data on this. If you recall, I made some references to data not being very good anyway. There is a need to collect good-quality data in this regard, so that is an issue. In respect of specialist colleges, I will ask Sylvia to comment.

[131] **Ms Lindoe:** We have Pengwyn College and Coleg Elidyr in Wales. Most of the other colleges are on the other side of the border. Obviously, some young people are going to need those very specialist facilities, so we need to consider the needs of the learners, where those learners are located and how we provide that. The counter to that is the whole issue about young people going with their peers to college. For some learners it is about being part of a bigger peer group and it is about whether your local college can provide that in a more integrated way. It is a difficult one to answer straightforwardly, but if learners are going to need specialist colleges, most of them are going to have to go out of Wales.

[132] **Ms Lewis:** If you put me on the spot on that issue, I would say that, if our overall policy intent is for social inclusion, I would want to see local colleges developing proper amenities and facilities to cater for all needs, not just the generality. Where the specialist colleges are located at a distance from home, this inevitably means uprooting and moving away from your family, when that is where a lot of your support will come from. So, I suppose I am not instinctively predisposed to growth in specialist colleges, in that they would be few and far between.

[133] **Peter Black:** When a pupil or student goes outside Wales to a specialist college, obviously, the education funding will follow that student, but, often, the funding for care and support, which may come from other departments, such as social care or social services, would not do that. Is that a particular problem that you have come across?

[134] **Ms Lewis:** It is not one that was raised specifically in either of these two reports, but I am aware of individual cases.

[135] **Peter Black:** Okay. Janet?

[136] **Janet Ryder:** First, I will follow on from the last point that was raised, because it does not just happen in cases where people go out of Wales. I am aware of a couple of instances where people have tried to find support within Wales, and, again, because there has been a mismatch between some funding coming from education and some from social services, there has been a problem. Can you confirm that you found no instances of that, or is it something that you have not looked into? Is it something that you feel that we should pursue further?

[137] **Ms Allinson:** We have not specifically looked at that issue. Obviously, we are looking at the people who are in education and training, but we are aware that those issues exist. The point about partnership working is that we really need to have all the agencies working together to ensure that these young people can move on smoothly. So, although we cannot provide you with direct evidence from these reports, because, by default, we are not looking at the people who are not there, we are aware that that is an issue.

[138] **Janet Ryder:** You raised a couple of instances where you said that the information about previous ability and experiences does not necessarily follow the child; it does not pass on to the college, or perhaps the college does not go to the school to find out about it. You also said that those who succeed better in college circumstances are those who are more individually supported. In the case of individual support, what role do you think that there would be for developing a role such as the learning coach, which may perhaps develop in the 14-19 pathways, to work with the individual person for the whole period of transition through college and on into work? How can we improve the transfer of knowledge? Is it a case of colleges having to work closer with schools, or are there some recommendations that we could put in place that would encourage that closer transfer of information?

[139] **Ms Lewis:** I will just bring in Elaine and Sylvia here, as they are both offering me advice. We come back repeatedly to the issue of partnership and ensuring that the thing works, because everyone is doing the bit that they are meant to be doing; so, there is a role for Careers Wales, schools and colleges. It is about expectations and ensuring that, in order to allow the young person to do well in the next stage of their educational training, they have good-quality information that is well up to date. We have seen some examples of poor things happening, for example, where there is a statement from a long time ago, which has never been added to or brought up to date in any way, and that is the only information that gets passed on. Clearly, there is a role for better communication and better expectations of what should be communicated, and at what times. There is also a role for ensuring that we can keep that data moving forward, being added to and refined, so that the young person's latest achievements and needs are known about.

10.30 a.m.

[140] **Ms Allinson:** To pick up on the learning coach role that you mentioned, clearly, that individual role could be very important for these youngsters. The issue that needs to be addressed is the kind of training needed for these learning coaches. We are finding that, when we look into the initial training for schoolteachers, the special needs aspect is not always embedded in that. So, it is very much about the kind of training that anyone taking on the learning coach role will have in order to be able to assist youngsters with additional learning needs.

[141] **Ms Lindoe:** The 14-19 curriculum provides a huge opportunity, because many more flexible arrangements will be needed for young people supported by the learning coach. It is about considering the progression routes for individuals. In order for that to happen, you are right to say that it is necessary to have good information transfer. Going back to what Susan said, it is about the quality of the partnerships—and the big partnerships at strategic level—and putting the functions in place with individual providers to ensure that people are doing what they need to do to ensure a good transfer. Careers Wales has a huge role to play in this information transfer, because

it is producing reports that move on with the young people. It is important to ensure that those reports, along with the full documentation from the schools, move on to colleges so that they can be read and taken into account.

[142] **Peter Black:** One of the recommendations of part 2 of our report was about having a record of need, which will hopefully assist in that information transfer. That may be particularly useful. Jeff?

[143] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I would like to raise two issues that, I think, are linked to the last question. You mentioned earlier that further education teachers do not always take into account prior learning. It is surprising to hear that in this day and age, because crediting prior achievement and prior learning is something that should be a part of assessing where a learner is at in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and de-motivating that person by making them learn things that they have already learned. So, it is particularly worrying to hear that that is the case in a number of further education institutions. Can you tell us a little more about what is being done to try to overcome that?

[144] My final point relates to the issue of transition to the workplace. This is important, as, ultimately, all of us want to learn things in order to have a career of some sort, either in employment or through self-employment; that is the purpose of it. So, I do not underestimate the difficulties. Attitudes of employers are key, both in terms of providing work-based learning placements, and then recruiting young people with learning difficulties as members of their staff. That is not a job that you as educationists or we as politicians can achieve; it is about changing the perceptions and attitudes of employers. That is a big job; I do not underestimate that. If you cannot comment on it, that is fine; we will have to explore other sources. However, are you aware of any work being done in partnership between, for example, the Confederation of British Industry, the Federation of Small Businesses and similar organisations, and yourselves, and further education and work-based learning providers, to try to improve attitudes and increase opportunities for young people?

[145] **Ms Lewis:** I will take your last question first. There are many small businesses in Wales. We have picked up that there are obstacles that prevent small businesses from having the time and the resources to take on people with learning difficulties. They see it as quite a daunting process, and they are not sure about the insurance arrangements and similar issues. So, there is work to be done to make it much easier for small businesses to do this. Larger businesses, such as large national organisations—and one or two come to mind—do quite well in relation to this, but they have the resources and the structures in place, and have people whose work it is to develop this area within the business, so we see better outcomes there. Given the nature of the business landscape in Wales, there is a big issue in relation to small businesses.

[146] **Ms Allinson:** On the work-based learning implementation plan in the context of linking with employers, there is a lot work going on on that and we have been remitted to look at some of it this year. This is an opportunity for us to place some emphasis on what happens to this sector of young people. Earlier this year, when we were reporting on work-based learning, you asked us about youngsters with additional learning needs in work-based learning training. Since then, we have kept a particular eye on their participation levels. Although we do not have any hard data, generally speaking, we find that they are not appearing in great numbers in work-based learning, and those that do tend to have only moderate learning difficulties. So, there is a whole swathe of youngsters who are not coming through into this area of training, even before they can consider starting to link with employers. There are issues there that we can pick up on in our work with the Assembly on the work-based learning improvement plan.

[147] **Ms Lewis:** You touched on what I think is quite an important point, towards the end: you asked whether Estyn is working with the CBI and so on. I think that the short answer to that is 'no', but perhaps we should be. Perhaps that is something that we need to be remitted to do,

through the annual remit letter, so that we work at a more strategic level. We have lots of information coming through about what the scene is like; we do not need to go out to look at that again, but we need to try to get some movement on some of the issues. That would be a very helpful way forward, I think.

[148] On your first question about how you get people in further education to take note of prior learning, that is the eternal conundrum: how do you get that done at any level where there is a transition, whether that is from early years into primary education or from primary into secondary education and so on? You just have to keep working at it, get better data and make sure that the expectation is there, at a strategic level, that it is really not acceptable for youngsters, whatever their age, to be treading water in terms of what they do. We would always raise that in an individual report on a college, and it therefore becomes a thing that the college has to act on, as part of its action-plan work.

[149] **Jeff Cuthbert:** May I just come back on the prior achievement issue? I am happy with what you said in response to previous questions, and I am sure that there is scope for progress there. However, in terms of accrediting prior achievement, if someone is pursuing a national vocational qualification, crediting prior achievement is a standard method, these days, of assessing evidence, provided that it is properly substantiated. I accept that absolutely—there have to be checks and balances. That has been there for a number of years and I would have thought that the principles involved could be translated to an FE setting for non-NVQ-type courses, which are still of a vocational nature, reasonably easily by now. However, from what you are saying, that is not the case. Therefore, more work needs to be done on that, which will have a long-term benefit in cutting out unnecessary duplication.

[150] **Ms Lewis:** It is not done as well as it should be across the board.

[151] **Peter Black:** I note at this point that we invited the CBI to come to give evidence to us, but it declined as it had not done any work on the matter, and, therefore, it felt that it had nothing to contribute to the discussion. I just note that for the committee.

[152] **Christine Chapman:** This debate is long overdue; I am pleased that we are looking at this issue. From my experience, I think that when the system works well for young people, it works very well, but it can be disastrous as well. I have had experience of young people who have had a sheltered time in school who are then almost thrown out, into FE, with little support. So, I am pleased that we are having this discussion. Some Members have already made the points that I wanted to make. I was particularly interested in Janet's point about having one person working with a young person—I think that that has a huge amount of merit. I think that that could really make a difference.

[153] Jeff asked about the employers, which is the point that I wanted to make. You said, Susan, that you have not really spoken to organisations such as the CBI. It is disappointing that its representatives are not going to come to committee. Do you think that the Welsh Assembly Government, and particularly Andrew Davies's department, ought to have much closer links with this issue than we have had up until now? I understand that Remploy is having a review with the UK Government. Have you had any involvement in that, or do you have any comments on it, as far as transition is concerned?

10.40 a.m.

[154] **Ms Lewis:** I am not aware of any involvement that we have had. There is a good opportunity to bring together the two new merged departments—education, lifelong learning and skills, and enterprise, innovation and network—to ensure that there is closer working there on those issues on which it is sensible to do so. We would be very pleased to be involved in any kind of discussions there. I say that we have not worked with the CBI, but we have done conferences with it in the past, but not on this specific issue. So, there is room for better joined-up working

across the piece.

[155] **Christine Chapman:** A few years ago, the former Welsh Development Agency had a unit—the name of which has probably changed now—which worked with employers to encourage good attitudes towards disability, for example, but I was disappointed with the numbers of employers who were on the list. Perhaps you could look at that too. I hope that that is improving, but it is also about dialogue with Andrew Davies's department and the officials there. I think that that is the way forward. This committee will be considering skills, but Andrew Davies's department will have access to the employers, so there are huge opportunities there if we were to go for that.

[156] **Peter Black:** We will be inviting Remplo because it has wide experience of placing people with disabilities and additional needs into employment throughout the sector, so it will be interesting to hear its take on the issue.

[157] **Denise Idris Jones:** I was pleased to hear what you said about Careers Wales, namely that it is providing good-quality guidance for young people, especially those with special educational needs. I am a former secondary school teacher, who worked with Careers Wales and with year-11 pupils, some of whom had special educational needs. These young people had been given very close support up until the stage at which they were going for interviews, whether that was for a job in the future or for a placement for work experience. I was not always convinced that they were given proper advice on simple things like what to wear and how to conduct themselves during an interview. I have been interested to hear that when larger companies, such as Airbus on Deeside, conduct interviews, they give no feedback when young people are not successful, so they have no idea where they went wrong. Do you think that more work should be done on that?

[158] **Ms Lewis:** It sounds like it. It is essential that, if you are going to learn from your experience, you get clear feedback that is focused on that event.

[159] **Peter Black:** I am sure that you can also address that question to Careers Wales after the break, Denise.

[160] **Janet Ryder:** Are you satisfied that all learning environments are now physically adapted to allow students with a disability of any kind to participate fully in the learning experiences of their college, or is there still a lot of work that needs to be done? If so, would there be any recommendations that we would need to look at in the round?

[161] **Ms Lewis:** Everywhere we go, it is much better, but we do find that we are making recommendations of certain sorts to individual providers to do with physical access to buildings and moving around within buildings.

[162] **Janet Ryder:** Would we need to look at that if we were going to look at it on an individual basis or are any common themes still occurring?

[163] **Ms Lewis:** There are probably some common themes and we could probably get those out of our reports for you and give you some information that is even more up to date than that in my most recent annual report. We could look in our database and get some information for you, and send it to committee if that would be helpful.

[164] **Peter Black:** I think that that would be helpful. On that issue, there is a court case coming up involving a very large employer being taken to court by the Disability Rights Commission because of access to its buildings. I understand that it involves deciding what is reasonable in terms of provision. Although the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 makes provision that, when you employ someone who has a disability, you should ensure that they are treated equally, would that reasonableness test apply to smaller businesses? Are you aware of that? Perhaps it is outside your remit.

[165] **Ms Lewis:** It probably is outside my remit to comment on smaller businesses, but we have certainly seen progress in terms of education and training providers. Everyone is fully aware of the requirements of those. Sometimes, they have not got all the bits in place and we make comments when we find that that is the case. We could give you some information on a sector-by-sector basis, or, at least, on post-16 provision versus schools. If there are any other issues that you think we might be able to draw out of our database, we would be happy to do so.

[166] **Janet Ryder:** On higher education and students who progress into higher education, sometimes students' disabilities are not recognised until they get to higher education, which tends to be the case with dyslexia and dyspraxia, and so, in some cases, such disabilities can impact on their higher education learning. Where the assessment of those students is made, do you assess how that is delivered by the universities, because, in many cases, the universities drive the identification, but particularly in mathematics-based courses, where students are computer tested, it is very difficult to adjust the timing of those tests to allow students the extra half an hour or whatever they are allowed? Do you assess whether that is being delivered or would we need to look at another body for that?

[167] **Ms Lewis:** The only area that we do not inspect is higher education apart from teacher training courses such as the bachelor of education, the bachelor of arts and the postgraduate certificate in education. Those are the only parts of HE that we would inspect.

[168] **Janet Ryder:** Would that be the remit of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales?

[169] **Ms Allinson:** The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education is commissioned by HEFCW to undertake that work.

[170] **Janet Ryder:** Could we perhaps extend this to look at—

[171] **Peter Black:** If we can, we will find time to also include QAA, but we can certainly ask it to respond in writing to our consultation. If we can accommodate it in the time that we have available, we will do so.

[172] **Janet Ryder:** There is a particular issue relating to access to material through the medium of Welsh in this area.

[173] **Peter Black:** Do you have a comment on that, Susan?

[174] **Ms Lewis:** Not in terms of higher education because we do not inspect in HE, but, in general, the issue of bilingual materials and courses remains a concern.

[175] **Peter Black:** Okay. Are there any more questions? I see not, so I thank you again for coming. If you could provide a summary of your opening remarks and any amplification that you wish to add to those, they would be very helpful.

[176] We will break now. Could you please return at 11.05 a.m.?

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10.48 a.m. a 11.08 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 10.48 a.m. and 11.08 a.m.*

Adolygiad Polisi Anghenion Addysgol Arbennig—Rhan 3: Casglu Tystiolaeth Policy Review of Special Educational Needs—Part 3: Evidence Gathering

[177] **Peter Black:** Welcome back to the Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee. We will proceed with our evidence taking on SEN part 3. I welcome Careers Wales to the committee. We have John Llewellyn, chief executive of Careers Wales north-west Wales, Steve Hole, business support manager for the Careers Wales association and Jayne Tilley, the functional manager for SEN at Careers Wales Mid Glamorgan and Powys. I hope that I have got all that

right. I remind you that we are taking a verbatim record of the meeting, which will appear on the committee's web pages. I point out to the committee that we have received a very helpful background paper from Careers Wales, which is available. I will start by asking you to make a short presentation.

[178] **Mr Llewellyn:** As an organisation, we welcome this opportunity to provide an input into the review. In the paper that we submitted, we identified some of the key components of the context, underlining the importance of the links between the whole area of transition and the Assembly's current development work on inclusion, the review work of this committee, and also the 14-19 learning pathways developments. The paper also outlines Careers Wales's role in the area of transition.

[179] As an organisation, the focus of Careers Wales across its all-age brief is not only on transition, but, importantly, on the resulting progression and destinations of individuals. The end product is crucial. To where do the individuals eventually progress, and what is their place and role in the community and society? How have their education provision and transition arrangements helped and assisted them along the way? We therefore particularly welcomed the inclusion, in the review's terms of reference, of the transition leading to adult life and employment.

11.10 a.m.

[180] I will now cover some of the general points made in the paper. Special needs provision inevitably involves a multi-agency approach, and it is probably common understanding now that Wales needs a more holistic and co-ordinated policy framework for transition arrangements, which clearly lays out multi-agency roles and responsibilities and which covers all the relevant Assembly departments and all key partner organisations. In addition, all these agencies need a common understanding of these protocols, and, importantly, this holistic approach should extend to Assembly policies and practice relating to adults with learning disabilities.

[181] On another key point, we believe that quality assurance is absolutely vital. There needs to be a commitment across the range of agencies involved to implement agreed procedures and protocols consistently. That means robust internal monitoring of implementations by all partners, together with some form of external monitoring of inspection. I think that the whole area would really benefit from some strong central direction.

[182] Before I turn to some funding issues, one further point is that, as identified by Estyn, there has been no real evaluation of the impact of special educational needs provision in terms of its longer-term benefits for the individual. This is vital when you think about transition and longer-term progression issues. We underline the fact that the application of the Estyn common inspection framework and the Assembly's provider-performance review in the work-based learning route need to be particularly sensitive to measuring the impact of provision on the progress of young people with special educational needs. Those are two vital points.

[183] Funding is obviously a turnkey in the whole area, and I will make a number of points, some of which are in the paper. Sorry, they are all in the paper, are they not? We suggest that there be a review of the balance of the overall current funding allocation, with more emphasis being placed on the funding aimed at improving longer-term positive outcomes, such as the take-up of employment. Perhaps we can return to this later. We are spending a lot of money on provision, but not very much money on ensuring that people get a real benefit from that provision. So, the balance needs, perhaps, to shift more towards the end of the whole process.

[184] My next point relates to the mechanisms for accessing funding for provision for young people with special educational needs. They are complicated and cumbersome, and they need to be clearer and more streamlined. This is exacerbated by the fact that funding can come from more than one source, which often works against the best interests of individual students. Another

dimension of funding is that training providers are funded on qualification outcomes, but no longer on job outcomes. We believe that there is a real need for the reintroduction of progression payments for job and work-related placements—that is, as well as for qualifications outcomes. The present qualifications-only funding system can act as a deterrent, we believe, to the recruitment of certain young people by training providers, who tend to favour those recruits who are more likely to achieve qualifications and, therefore, attract funding. We would also support the widening of the range of qualifications that are funded to better embrace progress and achievement at lower levels. Moving on, there is a decreasing and, we believe, inadequate level of funding for support work and support workers for young people with special educational needs.

[185] Finally on funding, we believe that it should be allocated so that all post-16 providers are able to offer linked provision for young people with special educational needs as a method of introducing the young person to the next stage of provision. This not only gives the young person the chance to make a gradual transition, but it also enables the new provider to assess the needs of the individual over a certain period in order to make adequate preparations.

[186] Moving to transitional planning in schools, at this point, I remind the committee that we did respond to the questionnaire on the statutory assessment framework in phase 2, and that contained many points that are relevant to transition. As an organisation that operates throughout Wales, we see a lack of consistency in transition planning, which ranges from the very good and excellent to the other end of the spectrum. This underlines the need for widely agreed multi-agency policies, protocols and procedures for transitional planning. The paper gives examples of where this is already being locally addressed in the form of local multi-agency transition protocols and panels. Careers Wales is in the process of finalising a national Careers Wales transition protocol relating to our role in transition planning, to enhance consistency internally and to influence any local multi-agency protocols and national developments in this area. We have worked with the Assembly Government to enhance the guidance documentation in respect of the SEN code of practice, and we will jointly deliver, with the Assembly, awareness-raising sessions targeted at multi-agency audiences across Wales.

[187] To reiterate, a key message from Careers Wales, in relation to transition planning, is the need for robust quality assurance of the implementation. Present systems would produce better results if appropriate monitoring was taking place consistently. The same will be true in relation to any new developments and systems that come about as a result of this review and the work going on in the inclusion agenda within the Assembly.

[188] I turn now to transition post-school, and I will focus on a number of points. Many of these points will underline some of the points that Estyn made earlier. Increasingly, young people with SEN see going to college as the only real progression route when they leave school. One contributing factor is the decreasing number of appropriate opportunities available in the work-based learning route for young people with special educational needs. In addition, the poor quality of some of the provision in this route, as identified by Estyn, does not help the overall situation. As a further point, we suggest that there would be a longer term benefit for individuals from a bespoke pre-entry provision, for young people who are not ready to access mainstream training provision, in order to enhance the provision that is already there.

[189] Finance is also a consideration for young people who would like to access work-based learning. The low level of the training allowance means that, in certain circumstances, there is no financial incentive. A young person on work-based learning can be worse off financially than if they were at home on benefits. In addition, the benefits regulations are complex and there is a perceived financial risk in giving up benefits to access training, because it can then be difficult to return to those benefits in the future, should the need arise. There is an annex to the paper that puts a little more meat on the bone in that respect.

[190] Turning to transition post further education, there are, in general, a decreasing number of

opportunities available for young people with special educational needs in the areas of employment and daycare provision, as well as in the work-based learning route, as already discussed. Earlier, it was suggested that a review is needed of the balance of the overall funding allocation, with more emphasis being placed on funding aimed at improving longer-term positive outcomes such as the take-up of employment.

[191] Funding could be targeted in many ways and we believe that the following areas are worthy of consideration. The first is considered awareness-raising among employers of the whole area of SEN and the advantages of employing young people with SEN. We do not underestimate the task. It is a culture change but, although it is difficult, we cannot avoid it. It is crucial in relation to opportunities for young people post FE and training. Second is enhancing financial incentives to employers to provide sustainable employment opportunities for young people with special needs, and also to provide work placements and transitional one-to-one support and back up in the workplace. Third is subsidising employment, which could be cheaper for the country than a life spent on benefits, and obviously much more satisfying for the individual concerned. Fourth is statutory funding for sheltered supported employment options as, with the current non-statutory situation, planning is extremely difficult. Fifth is financial incentives—we have already mentioned benefits—and financial benefits for young people and their families to enter the work training route. An important point is raising the aspirations of parents in relation to the potential of their children. We may need campaigns to do this. Parents who do not have the right kind of aspirations for their young people can sometimes see benefits as the route they would want their young people to follow.

11.20 a.m.

[192] Finally, there is the increased funding for transition support, such as the job-coaching programmes that we have started to touch upon. Those are some of the areas, but you will notice that we are looking at the balance of funding moving more to that end. We have spent a lot of money up to that particular point in the process, on the provision, the support and the courses, but what do we actually spend on enabling these people to progress thereon?

[193] In conclusion, Careers Wales, as an organisation, is highly committed to providing high-quality services to young people, but particularly to working in partnership to benefit these clients. We are talking about multi-agency work. We are committed because we believe that we can make a difference, but only if we work together as organisations. Therefore, we look forward to working with you as an Assembly and other partners to address, and hopefully resolve, some of the issues in this report and also in the review as a whole.

[194] **Peter Black:** Thank you. There are a few questions for you.

[195] **William Graham:** I appreciate that the report that was submitted in advance. It is an immense help to Members to have it well in advance, so that we can formulate questions that are relevant to your presentation. I will ask you to expand on a couple of points that you made. One is on the reintroduction of progression payments for job work placement outcomes, which you touched upon. Will you give us some more evidence, because that is something that the committee will want to focus on, at least, in its review. Christine mentioned earlier the support work for young people in SEN. Will you expand on that? The low level of the training allowance ties in with your comments on benefits, and I link that in with the financial incentive for employers. More particularly, you made the point about calling for a cost-benefit analysis of subsidised employment. There must be evidence for that. Can you give us some evidence, or refer us to where we could find such evidence?

[196] **Mr Llewellyn:** I will ask Jayne to come in on your first point.

[197] **Ms Tilley:** In terms of the job outcome payment, training providers used to be given an outcome payment if they helped a young person find a job. Personally, I have had experience, as

an adviser, where a provider has told me that, because they no longer receive that payment, they will not invest time in ensuring that a young person moves forward from their placement into employment. It is more important for them that they get their qualification, so they may pull them off their placement to ensure that they achieve their qualification rather than getting a job outcome at the end of it. I find that very concerning, but, because of the funding issues, it was a staff allocation issue for them.

[198] **Mr Llewellyn:** I would add that the funding should be focusing on progression. We all know that qualifications can help people to progress, but there are other things that help people to get employment opportunities. For these particular clients, we feel that there needs to be an equal recognition, if you like, of the avenues by which they go into employment, and qualifications are not always the answer for every individual. I will ask Steve to come in on the next question about support work.

[199] **Mr Hole:** Taking the example of job-coaching schemes, there are a number of European social fund projects in Wales, some lottery funding and some organisations that run job-coaching facilities. It is interesting that what we have been talking about so far is that young people with special needs get a lot of support in education, often one-to-one support, which can then be withdrawn at the point at which they finish their education, usually entering college or employment. Job-coaching programmes tend to work in that an adult job coach will go to an employer and learn the job that a young person with special needs will then undertake. So, that person has one-to-one mentoring support during those crucial initial phases of entering employment, and that support is gradually weaned off until that individual is capable of holding down that job themselves. Again, the funding streams for this at the moment appear mainly to be via ESF funding or lottery funding, but the schemes that I am aware of are quite successful.

[200] **Mr Llewellyn:** In terms of benefit incentives, I do not have figures or anything of that nature with me, but what we are talking about here is that there is a significant number of young people who find that their decisions are over-influenced by the financial implications of going down the training route. The annex to the paper gives a good example of where this sort of thing happens. I suppose that I could say that the training allowance and the implications of the level of that training allowance do not just influence people with special educational needs either—they affect other, mainstream young people, in relation to their choices. A number of factors do that, including the quality of the provision, but, more importantly, perhaps, in most parts of Wales, it is the range of opportunities that are available that is the first key point.

[201] In terms of subsidised employment, in the discussion earlier on with Estyn you started to talk about the difficulties that we have in relation to the fact that there are many small employers who are, in many ways, focusing on ensuring that the business is going on. They are planning ahead as much as they can, but when we say that they are planning ahead, they might not be planning two years ahead—they might be planning two months ahead, or whatever. We are looking at a situation where employers who feel that they might be able to take on someone with special educational needs first of all need a bit of help with the culture change. They need to know what special educational needs are, what the implications are of taking on a young person with autism, for example, and what support they would need. Securing some support by way of a support worker, as well as some financial incentive to help with the wages, are the sort of approaches that would start to make a difference to the way that we move things forward.

[202] **Mr Hole:** I just wanted to say something from the other perspective—the family perspective—that has a bearing on this. In terms of employment, we are talking about some young people from backgrounds where employment is not the norm, and, indeed, where the family may have special needs, and sometimes multiple needs. So, there is almost a greater need for that incentivisation to be there in order to overcome some barriers that are automatically in place.

[203] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you for the presentation; it was a very useful contribution to our

review. Some of my points have been taken up, so, hopefully, I will not duplicate them. On the issue of financial incentives, we need to be a little cautious, because I would not want us to go down the road of suggesting that the benefits that are paid are somehow overgenerous or are acting as a disincentive to people getting into work. I would not want us to do that and I think that we have to be careful on that point. Rather, I would be happy to see funds spent on making it clear to young people who are approaching that transition period that a life of earning through work is vastly better than relying on a benefits regime, no matter what their or their family's life may have been up to that point. That is the message that we need to get across. I assume that, in some of your statements about the balance of funding, that is the sort of thing that you are driving at, and that, where you talk about improving longer-term positive outcomes such as the take-up of employment, we are talking in those sorts of terms. I support that.

[204] I agree that the issue of funding training outcomes, by itself, is not always productive, because it gives the impression that, if you get that qualification, you are therefore bound to move into employment in your chosen area. That is often not the case. However, while I want to see a better link between training and the economy, so that young people go on to a particular course on the basis of an informed choice, understanding the possibility of what sort of job is available at the end, and that funding, perhaps, in part, ought to be linked to the outcome in terms of employment or self-employment, qualification is a valuable achievement. Even if it is not immediately applicable to the job that they, hopefully, go into, it will undoubtedly be applicable at some point in their life. There will be portable issues that are learned and recognised in that qualification, which can be useful to them. So, I would not want us to get into the notion of saying that a qualification is not as important as we have been saying that it is. It is important, but we need to get the balance right. I agree on that.

11.30 a.m.

[205] From what you said, I think that you heard the Estyn discussion, so I will ask you about the perception of employers in order to get your views on this point. It is crucial that employers are prepared to take on youngsters who have learning difficulties. How do you think that that could be best achieved? We talked about the CBI, and it is disappointing to hear that it was not prepared to give evidence; I am disappointed, and I will make that clear to the CBI. Nevertheless, it is a key partner in this, as is the Federation of Small Businesses, particularly given the number of small and medium-sized enterprises in Wales. How do you feel we can better address that perception issue?

[206] **Mr Llewellyn:** I will come back to that. In terms of the financial points that you made, I certainly hope that I did not give mixed messages. I do not feel that the benefits are over-generous; I was just pointing out to the committee that the balance is such that it does not always make sense for young people to embark on training. I would argue for both of those areas to be better funded. I certainly would not want people to think that we are undermining the value of qualifications. The point is that, at the moment, the entire focus is on qualifications. We are looking at the balance and at ensuring that, in the same way that we are looking for parity of esteem between vocational and academic courses, we are looking for people within the work-based learning route to recognise the importance of work placements and job progression.

[207] Moving on to your point about working with employers, we need a strategy with a range of strands to engage with employers. Obviously, we have to work with employer organisations such as the CBI and the FSB, small businesses, and big employers. We also have to work with some of the infrastructure that has been put in place in relation to 14-19 developments and involvement in local learning networks. However, I would also argue that Careers Wales is an important vehicle for the Assembly to use in relation to work with employers. We work with employers in a range of ways, from recruitment to their involvement in curriculum issues and general links between education and business. So, I think that there are a number of advantages to the idea that, at this stage, Careers Wales is one of the most important vehicles that you can use. It already has day-to-day contact with employers. We spoke to Jane Davidson and Chris Chapman recently about our

role in relation to 14-19 development, particularly in terms of work-focused education and the engagement of employers. However, we cannot rely on any one organisation. It is a bit like special educational needs in that we need every Assembly department, whether it is Andrew Davies's department or Jane Davidson's, to be focused on the engagement of employers across the board; from offering modern apprenticeships to working with youngsters who may be working towards the type of qualifications offered by the Open College Network or the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network and looking for job progression. Steve, I do not know whether you want to add to that. My point is that we need a strategy with a wide range of strands.

[208] **Mr Hole:** I would like to add a couple of points. I met with SummitSkills, the sector skills council for the building services engineering sector, yesterday. It provided me with an excellent publication targeted at employers. A number of sector skills councils had worked together on this and the Construction Industry Training Board has also been involved. It contained advice for employers on equality and diversity issues. It identified the benefits of employing people with special needs and of looking outside stereotypes in terms of employment opportunities. It would be good if we could put this on the Careers Wales website. Having said that, in terms of the area that I am familiar with in south-east Wales and the Valleys, it is often practice that influences small employers. This is why it is so important to have young people with special needs in training. If a young person with special needs succeeds in the workforce in one company, that will influence other companies to follow suit. One of the dangers of losing the critical mass of young people with special needs in training is that that best practice does not shine out at local level.

[209] **Janet Ryder:** We asked Estyn about the failure sometimes to transmit the knowledge of a pupil's ability into a college education. Does that also transmit into a workplace experience? How much is there a progression of knowledge of that, and how much would the work that we have suggested in the first part of the review of the learning programmes help with that?

[210] You talked about a job coach. How could or should that role link into an extended role for a learning coach in a one-to-one support situation for someone with a disability? How much do we still stereotype the kind of work and work placement that is offered to a young person with a disability? How can we overcome that stereotyping?

[211] **Ms Tilley:** I will take the first point. In terms of transferring information into the workplace, the role of Careers Wales with the learning and skills plans is to provide information to education or training providers. If any young person goes into work-based learning, the provider will receive the same level of information as a college would receive. The issue is perhaps more to do with the fact that they may not be as familiar with its purpose, and while we have a role in making them more aware of that, and we have tried to do so, because of the difference in the funding systems and the bureaucracy surrounding the funding, providers are more reluctant than colleges to ask for additional support for learners.

[212] **Janet Ryder:** Can you—[*Inaudible.*]

[213] **Ms Tilley:** I do not know whether we have been able to. ELWa, as it was, said that only three training providers in Wales regularly applied for funding to support young people with additional needs in training. Based on our learning and skills plan, when we ask providers to ask for money, they turn it around and say that whenever they have asked, they have not been given it, and so there is no point in them asking, because the criteria are vague and they cannot get answers. There is a kind of mismatch in the perception of how easy it is to get the funding.

[214] **Mr Llewellyn:** You could be cynical as well, could you not? You could say that sometimes people use things for their own benefit, in the sense that they are perhaps not that keen to take on young people with special educational needs, and, therefore, they hide behind the bureaucracy or the perceived bureaucracy. I suppose that that is what could be said.

[215] **Ms Tilley:** I also think—it may be a less cynical view—that colleges deal with a much

larger number of young people with additional needs, and therefore the system is more ingrained, they are more used to it, they have set it up and it has been refined. Providers are less likely to get significant numbers of young people with additional needs, and so they are less familiar with the systems. I think that they then become more reluctant to get involved; for example, if they have to find three quotes to appoint someone to do a specific task, I think that they struggle with the practicalities of doing that.

[216] **Mr Hole:** On your point about the learning coach and the job coach, it will be interesting to see how the learning coach role develops in terms of 14-19 education. That is certainly an area of development that Careers Wales very much supports. To some extent, the problems of the organisations that provide job-coach services at the moment derive from the fact that, because they are often reliant on voluntary, lottery or European social fund funding, a large part of their time is simply spent chasing funding as opposed to concentrating on the provision of services. Therefore, yes, I think that that kind of extension would be quite interesting.

[217] **Mr Llewellyn:** The important thing is that we identify those key elements that we think lead to long-term benefits for learners. We believe that providing job coaching and assistance during that transition period is one of them. To be honest, we do not think that it matters who does it; the important thing is that it does not rely on voluntary funding and that there is a statutory bit of funding to ensure that the job-coach role is applied consistently. One of the Assembly's policies is to talk about national policy and local delivery, and I think that, once you go down that road, you have to accept that there will be different structures at the local level. You have to be able to say that, in this patch, a job-coaching role might be placed in this organisation or provided by that body, whereas it might be a bit different somewhere else. I will also say that when we look at some key elements—I am just using this as an example—there may be occasions when the Assembly will feel that it might wish to steer the local partnerships more than it does now.

11.40 a.m.

[218] Sometimes, if you have a national policy that is locally delivered, the key element is what is locally determined. That is the real issue. I believe—and this is a personal comment; it is not from a Careers Wales point of view—that the Assembly perhaps needs to think clearly about which parts of its policy need to be imposed on a local network and which parts the network itself can determine. There is a fine balance there, but I think that that is crucial as we go through 14-19 developments. Again, in the meeting with Jane Davidson and Chris last week, that was one of our key messages, namely that there are certain roles that Careers Wales would play that we already cover in relation to work with employers, which local networks need to have underlined in Assembly documentation so that we do not have organisations duplicating but have them clearly recognising whose role it is to do what and that it is a national steer and a high priority. That is key to the Assembly in developing policies, particularly in terms of special educational needs. It comes back, if you like, to having those multi-agency protocols, which are not only there but are commonly understood and monitored internally and by external bodies.

[219] **Janet Ryder:** I asked you about stereotyping. I will take that a little further. It is my perception that we have gone through education, and the drive has been to mainstream as much as possible, and the move has been away from specialist provision. Some of the recommendations that we have made might change that somewhat. When you reach that transition phase, it seems that we tend to move back into that specialist provision, and the kind of work that seems to be offered tends to come under employers such as Remploy and various local authority initiatives. To what extent are we providing people with a disability with mainstream, good-prospect employment, and to what extent are we still putting too much emphasis on a supported working environment? How much of that is because of a lack of parental vision or lack of vision on society's part?

[220] **Mr Llewellyn:** How long do we have?

[221] **Peter Black:** Not long.

[222] **Mr Llewellyn:** Before I answer that, I will just ask Jayne to make a point about mainstreaming and special schools, which she was making to me when we were listening to the earlier discussions. I know that you want to get it in, Jayne, and we will get it in now, if we may.

[223] **Ms Tilley:** One of the views that I think that people sometimes miss is that, when you look at social inclusion—and this point was made earlier—it may be more appropriate for a more local college or local provision to be made more available. We often see the reverse of that from the young people. Everybody seems to think that what the young people are going to want to do if they have been in a mainstream school is to go to the local college with the people with whom they were in school. We find that, often, for people with particular impairments, particularly those who have a visual impairment, that is not the case. They may request to go to a specialist college because they want to be with people whom they consider to be their peers, who are not the people with whom they have gone to school but are people who have the same issues as them and are going through the same things at the same sort of time. So, we just wanted to make the point that it is not just about moving into the mainstream.

[224] **Mr Llewellyn:** On gender stereotyping or stereotyping in general—and I will turn to Steve in a moment—one of the things that I would like to point out here is that this has to be tackled very early on, and that means that there is a lot of work to do in relation to stereotyping in the primary sector. It needs to be a multi-agency issue, particularly in the gender area.

[225] **Janet Ryder:** Not gender—

[226] **Mr Llewellyn:** No, I realise that, but I am just making the point, which is perhaps slightly outside the brief, but it is important that we realise that a lot of attitudes that we deal with, be it in terms of gender stereotyping or not, are well formed by the time that we work with young people, and that is why we are working our way towards extending our brief to work with younger people, in addition to what we are presently able and funded to do.

[227] **Mr Hole:** Estyn made a point about the difficulty in tracking people post further education. We have to put our hands up and say that we do not have detailed evidence of the quality that I suspect you would want on this.

[228] On whether the stereotyping is there, yes, I think that it is. Sometimes, the individual, the parents and the employers feel comfortable about putting people in particular boxes. On combating it, one difficulty relates to the wide range of disabilities that we are talking about. As a useful example, Jayne and I met with the Royal National Institute for the Blind recently to discuss work experience and how important it is in terms of attitudinal issues relating to work and aspiration. The RNIB was quite concerned that too safe an option was being taken with young people with visual impairments for work experience. In other words, we would ring up the RNIB and ask it to take someone on placement in its offices in Newport road, or maybe we would be disinclined to look at areas where health and safety was more of an issue; perhaps we felt more comfortable about putting people into offices. So, we went back and did some research on that and we found that that was not the case, and we were quite pleased with the fact that we were managing to get a reasonably diverse range of placements for young people with visual impairments. However, we need to spend more time on this and focus more on the range of disability issues to see whether that is the case, because what we do with them in schools in terms of employer-related, work-focused education and work experience and so on will have a bearing on people's aspirations for working in future.

[229] **Mr Llewellyn:** The underlying point to all of this is that the impact of what we can do is closely linked to what is out there and what can be made available, which employers are participating and so on.

[230] **Ms Tilley:** I agree, particularly on young people with learning difficulties. The issue is not so great with people with physical disabilities, but many young people in mainstream schools go into discrete provision in colleges simply because the college assessment system places them there. So, a number of young people apply for mainstream courses, but because they do not have a sufficient level of basic skills, the assessment system is such that they are referred internally through the college to the discrete provision. One of your earlier questions was on prior learning, but people are not taking that into consideration—they are doing this through a one-off basic skills assessment without looking at the person as a whole.

[231] **Peter Black:** We are running out of time and we need to get the Disability Rights Commission in. There are two more questions from Christine and Owen John, but please try to be brief.

[232] **Christine Chapman:** In your report, you flag up your concern about the lack of consistency in transitional planning because of the fact that, as an organisation, you are working across 22 local authority areas and, even in Careers Wales, you have a number of companies. How do you see your role in trying to bring all of this together and being a key driver in provision for young people with special educational needs? I can see the practical difficulties, but how much is your role defined as someone who can bring all of this together and drive this forward?

[233] **Mr Llewellyn:** In terms of developing and moving forward, we are already seeing some local developments, which we have identified in our paper. Those include a number of local organisations getting together to work through the transition process in their locality. We feel that that is the sort of approach that we need, but we need it nationally. We have already, more or less, finalised some work, so that we know what we should be saying to each of our local networks about the role that we need to negotiate with them. The next step is to transfer the good practice within those local protocols into a national protocol, because Wales is not that big. The analogy that is often made is that we are as big as Kent. We ought to be able to get together to work on a national basis across our different regions. I was talking to Alan Lansdown earlier about the fact that we are already involved, as an organisation, in the inclusion sub-group work that is going on, which addresses statementing and assessment and so on and which all feeds into transition. We are hoping to input into a group that will be drawn together within the Assembly across different departments to try to move forward the national protocol that we need.

11.50 a.m.

[234] As I said earlier, we are also working with the Assembly on delivering some awareness training to multi-agency audiences. Have I answered your question, Christine?

[235] **Christine Chapman:** I just wondered whether there were any particular barriers. The situation has changed since the establishment of Careers Wales, but are there further barriers that need to be addressed? You work across Wales, but we still have slightly different cultures working together.

[236] **Mr Llewellyn:** I can tell that Steve wants to say something, but what I would say is that we can give many examples of where transitional planning has strengths and weaknesses. In the health sector, it is sometimes very difficult to get one person to act as a conduit for all the health support that might be required. It is about those sorts of tangible things, but, once you start to work through the process, you see that it is not rocket science. It is just that you go into one organisation in one part of the country, and see that the structure is such that the person who deals with it is in a different department. We must get over those types of issues, but it is not that difficult; it is just about spending and investing the time and sitting down to do it. A national protocol could be written in such a way that a local authority, health board or trust could look at it and say that they need someone to fill a particular role, and then, as long as they have someone to ensure that the information flows within the organisation, that is fine.

[237] **Mr Hole:** One of the biggest practical barriers is the fact that there are five local authority areas in my company. If they have different practical procedures for organising transition, it makes it very difficult to plan across the company, particularly where you see shining examples of good practice. You would hope that that good practice was happening across the whole piece.

[238] **Owen John Thomas:** Yr oeddech yn sôn am y newid diwylliannol sy'n wynebu pobl ifanc pan fyddant yn trosglwyddo. Mae rhai pobl ifanc yn wynebu newid diwylliannol mwy na hynny, gan eu bod wedi cael eu haddysg drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg ac o bosibl yn dod o gartrefi Cymraeg. Pa ddarpariaeth neu adnoddau sydd gennych i helpu pobl ifanc anabl sy'n siarad Cymraeg fel iaith gyntaf i drosglwyddo? A yw'r llenyddiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg, er enghraifft? A ydych yn cydweithredu â phrosiectau Cymraeg fel yr un sydd yn Waunfawr yn eich ardal, gan fy mod yn deall eich bod yn dod o Wynedd? Mae uned yn Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr ar gyfer plant ag anghenion addysgol arbennig gydag adnoddau arbennig. Pa rôl ydych chi yn ei chwarae neu pa waith ydych chi'n ei wneud yn y maes Cymraeg?

Owen John Thomas: You mentioned the cultural change that young people have to face during transition. Some young people have to face an even greater cultural change, because they have received their education through the medium of Welsh and perhaps come from Welsh-speaking homes. What provision or resources do you have to assist young, disabled first-language Welsh speakers in transition? Is the literature bilingual, for example? Do you collaborate with Welsh projects such as the one in Waunfawr in your area, as I understand that you come from Gwynedd? Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr has a unit for children with special educational needs, which has dedicated resources. What role do you play or what work are you undertaking in the sphere of the Welsh language?

[239] **Mr Llewellyn:** As you alluded to, I am from the north-west of Wales and I am a Welsh learner, so I can see both sides of the issue. First of all, all Careers Wales literature is bilingual. In our part of the world, our special needs specialists are all natural first-language Welsh speakers, so they do their work with young people through the medium of Welsh. In certain parts of our company, there are more English-speaking areas, and so they use the young person's language of choice. That pattern is reflected throughout Wales in that we work with whatever organisations on the ground through the medium of Welsh or English. I suppose that there is quite a significant difference between the percentage of Welsh speakers available in the company for which I work and that in south-east Wales, for example. In our recruitment practice, Careers Wales companies have the same Welsh language policy and we all recruit as far as we can against the backcloth of the language use in our area. However, we are trying to get as many of our staff as possible to become totally bilingual. To answer your question, as far as I am concerned, we work through the medium of the Welsh language where that is the first choice of the young person in those programmes.

[240] **Owen John Thomas:** A yw pobl ifanc Cymraeg eu hiaith mewn rhai rhannau o Gymru yn wynebu problemau gyda hyn wrth geisio dod o hyd i waith?

Owen John Thomas: Do young Welsh speakers in some parts of Wales have problems with this when trying to find work?

[241] **Mr Llewellyn:** On balance, I would say 'no'. Perhaps my colleague will have more information about that than I have, but I do not think that having problems accessing services from Careers Wales in the Welsh language has been raised with us as a problem for young people with special educational needs. I am certainly not aware of any issues in that regard. Obviously, as we do with all our Welsh-language provision, we will monitor that through our Welsh language scheme.

[242] **Peter Black:** Thank you for your evidence, which has been very helpful and useful, and for the paper in particular, which, too, has been helpful for the review.

11.56 a.m.

Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note

[243] **Peter Black:** While we bring the representatives of the Disability Rights Commission Wales in, we have several papers to note, which we might as well note now. There are the minutes of the previous meeting, and we also have other committees' strategic work programmes from the Culture, Welsh Language and Sport Committee, the Enterprise, Innovation and Networks Committee, Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee, the Health and Social Services Committee, and the Local Government and Public Services Committee. We also have a letter from Gwenda Thomas, who is Chair of the Committee on Equality of Opportunity, in relation to the budgeting process, and we have a paper from the Minister on academic achievement and entitlement to free school meals. All those are there to note. I know that Janet wants to raise an issue with regard to one of them.

[244] **Janet Ryder:** It is just on the forward work programme for the Local Government and Public Services Committee. As it is that committee that we have now established actually sets the schools' budget, would it be appropriate for the Chair to write to the committee, asking whether this committee can have any input on their deliberations at that point in the budget-setting?

[245] **Peter Black:** I am happy to write that letter, and we will see what response we get. Are Members content with that? I see that you are.

11.57 a.m.

Adolygiad Polisi Anghenion Addysgol Arbennig—Rhan 3: Tystiolaeth Comisiwn Hawliau Anabled Cymru Policy Review of Special Educational Needs—Part 3: Evidence from the Disability Rights Commission Wales

[246] **Peter Black:** I welcome the representatives of the Disability Rights Commission Wales to the committee. We have Alun Thomas, who is the acting director, and Anne Greagsby. The format here is that we will ask you to make a brief presentation, of some five minutes, if possible. A verbatim record will be made, which will appear on our web pages, and you will have an opportunity to look at that before the final version is published. I thank you very much for your comprehensive background paper. Please assume that we have all read it when you make your presentation. I am asking you to give your views.

[247] **Mr Thomas:** Thank you very much. We welcome the opportunity to address you.

[248] Hoffwn ddweud ar y dechrau fy mod wedi cael fy nharo gan arwyddocâd y rhaglen ddogfen, *O Flaen Dy Lygaid*, bythefnos yn ôl, am waith Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr yng Nghaerdydd wrth uno plant ag anabledau gwahanol i mewn i'r ysgol, a chan eiriau'r prifathro, Geraint Rees, mai'r sialens bennaf iddo ef oedd a fyddai'r datblygiad a gafwyd yn yr ysgol yn cael ei adlewyrchu y tu allan i'w drysau yn nyfodol y plant ag anabledau gwahanol. Yr hyn sydd yn ein taro ni yn y comisiwn yw absenoldeb pobl anabl. Gwyddom fod pobl anabl 16 mlwydd oed ddwywaith yn llai tebygol o gael cymwysterau addysgiadol, ddwywaith yn fwy tebygol o beidio â bod mewn

I would like to say at the outset that I was struck by the significance of the documentary, *O Flaen Dy Lygaid*, which was shown a fortnight ago, about the work at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr in Cardiff to integrate children with various disabilities into the school, and by the words of the headteacher, Geraint Rees, who said that the main challenge for him was to see whether the development achieved while at the school would be reflected outside its doors in the future of those children with various disabilities. We, in the commission, are struck by the absence of disabled people. We know that disabled people aged 16 are twice as likely not to gain any educational qualifications, twice as

addysg, hyfforddiant a chyflogaeth, a bod y gagedor hwnnw yn ehangu i dair gwaith yn llai tebygol wrth sôn am addysg, hyfforddiant a chyflogaeth yn 19 oed. Gwyddom hefyd nad yw dros chwarter pobl 19 oed ag anableddau yn y system addysg, hyfforddiant a chyflogaeth, ac mae hynny'n ffigur ysgytwol.

12.00 p.m.

[249] O edrych ar y dystiolaeth a gawsoch eisoes, nid ydym yn credu y caiff difrifoldeb y sefyllfa ei adlewyrchu yn yr argymhellion a'r gwaith a wnaed gan Estyn, er enghraifft, yn 'Support for All'. Credaf fod angen inni adlewyrchu'r difrifoldeb hwnnw. Mae'n rhaid inni fod yn ymwybodol bod cylchdro bywyd yma. Os ydyw pobl yn llai tebygol o fod mewn addysg a hyfforddiant, maent yn fwy tebygol o fod mewn tloedi ac yn ddi-waith.

[250] O edrych ymlaen wedyn, mae disgwyliadau isel gan awdurdodau a rhieni o ran eu plant. Un o'r datganiadau y byddwn yn eu rhannu gennych yw datganiad David Sherlock, prif arolygydd addysg oedolion yn Lloegr, pan ddywedodd:

'compassion is seen as not only sufficient, but as a justification for restricting ambition and growth'.

[251] Credaf fod hynny hefyd yn wir yng Nghymru. Gwelwn hefyd fod disgwyliadau'r bobl ifanc yn dueddol o fod yn isel iawn; nad yw pobl ifanc yn mynychu addysg uwch a phellach, ac mae 60 y cant ohonynt yn credu na fyddai darpariaeth addas yn cael ei chyflwyno iddynt ac felly dyna'u rheswm am beidio â mynychu addysg uwch a phellach. Mae'r sefyllfa honno'n dra ddifrifol.

[252] O safbwynt symud rhwng ysgolion, mae'n rhaid inni gydnabod bod sialens o safbwynt mynd i ysgol fwy gydag amryw o athrawon. Mae'n rhaid inni ystyried hefyd bod newidiadau daearyddol yn digwydd, a bod y rheiny nid yn unig yn effeithio ar y system addysg ond ar y pecyn gofal—weithiau mae'n rhaid ail-wneud pecynnau gofal wrth symud o un awdurdod lleol i'r llall yn y cyd-destun hwnnw.

[253] Un o'r pethau sy'n ein poeni'n fawr yw'r hyn sy'n digwydd i'r sawl sydd heb

likely not to be in education, training or employment, and that gulf widens to three times less likely when talking about being in education, training or employment at the age of 19. We also know that over a quarter of disabled 19-year-olds are not in the education, training or employment system, which is shocking.

Looking at the evidence that you have already received, we do not think that the gravity of this situation is reflected in the recommendations and the work done by Estyn, for example, in 'Support for All'. I think that the gravity of the situation needs to be reflected. We have to be aware that there is a life cycle here. If people are less likely to be in education and training, they are more likely to be living in poverty and more likely to be unemployed.

Looking further ahead, there are low expectations from authorities and parents in relation to their children. I will share with you a statement by David Sherlock, the chief inspector of adult education in England, who said:

I think that that is also true in Wales. We also see that young people's expectations tend to be very low; young people do not attend higher or further education, and 60 per cent of them believe that the appropriate provision would not be available to them and, therefore, that is their reason for not attending higher or further education. It is quite a serious situation.

In terms of transition between schools, we have to acknowledge that there is a challenge with regard to attending a larger school with a variety of teachers. We must also consider that geographical changes occur, and that these not only impact on the education system but on care packages—sometimes these have to be re-drafted in moving from one local education authority to another in that context.

One issue that concerns us greatly is what happens to those who do not have educational

ddatganiadau addysgiadol. Mae hyn yn aruthrol o bwysig o ystyried y cynnydd yn y nifer o fewn ein hysgolion sydd heb ddatganiadau ond ag anabledau. Fel y gwyr y comisiwn, nid oes unrhyw fath o gefnogaeth gyfreithiol i anghenion addysgiadol y bobl ifanc hyn o safbwynt y Ddeddf Gwahaniaethu ar Sail Anabledd 1995. Credwn y caiff hyn effaith yn y dyfodol. Hefyd, mae'n rhaid inni ystyried nad yw'n reidrwydd ar Gyrfaoedd Cymru i ddod i mewn i gyfweliadau trosi'r sawl sydd heb ddatganiad. Mae'n bwysig inni gywiro hynny.

[254] O edrych ar drosglwyddo gwybodaeth, gwyddom fod cyfyngiadau direswm ar hyn o bryd ynglyn â'r Ddeddf Diogelu Data 1998. Yn ein barn ni, mae problemau wedi codi'n gyffredinol—mae dim ond yn rhaid inni edrych ar lofruddiaethau erchyll Soham, er enghraifft—o ran dehongli'r ddeddf hon yn rhy gaeth. O safbwynt hyn, wrth gwrs, mae'r diffyg gwybodaeth a aiff drwy'r system i'r colegau addysg bellach ac i'r sector hyfforddiant yn anaddas ac yn peri oedi o safbwynt sicrhau'r math o gymorth y mae ar unigolion ag anghenion arbennig ei angen.

[255] O edrych ar y system addysg uwch a phellach, mae canran y bobl ifanc hyn yn ein colegau addysg bellach yng Nghymru, sef 3.8 y cant, yn siomedig iawn i ni fel comisiwn. Mae'n rhaid cofio bod y sector hwn yn allweddol gan na chaiff nifer fawr o bobl anabl gyfle i sicrhau'r cymwysterau perthnasol o fewn yr ysgol. Credaf fod astudio'n rhan amser yn fwy allweddol—yn fwy naturiol weithiau—i rai pobl yn y sector hwn. Yr ydym wedi gwneud adroddiad yn y comisiwn, 'Taking Away the Strain?', sy'n adlewyrchu'r newidiadau y mae eu hangen yng Nghymru o safbwynt addasiadau rhesymol o fewn y sector addysg uwch a phellach. Nid ymhelaethaf ar argymhellion yr adroddiad hwn ond mae ar gael gennym.

[256] Cefnogwn yr awgrymiadau i gael cronfa gychwynnol i roi cymorth i bobl, yn enwedig os nad yw'r wybodaeth ynglyn ag anghenion o fewn y colegau wedi cael ei basio ymlaen. Yn amlach na pheidio, nid yw'r cymorth ar gael yn ddigon buan ac nid yw'r asesiadau wedi'u cyflawni'n ddigon buan.

[257] O edrych ar hyfforddiant a chyflogaeth,

It is particularly important considering the increase in the number of pupils in our schools who are not stated but have disabilities. As the commission is aware, there is no legal support for the educational needs of these young people in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. We believe that this will have an impact in the future. We must also consider that Careers Wales does not necessarily have to attend the transition interviews of those without a statement. It is important that that is corrected.

In terms of the transfer of information, we know that there are unnecessary restrictions in relation to the Data Protection Act 1998 at present. In our opinion, there have been problems generally—we only have to look at the horrendous Soham murders, for example—in relation to interpreting this Act too restrictively. In relation to this, of course, the lack of information that goes through the system to further education colleges and to the training sector is not appropriate and causes a delay in terms of ensuring the kind of assistance that is required by individuals with special needs.

Looking at the further and higher education system, the percentage of these young people in our further education colleges in Wales, that is, 3.8 per cent, is a very disappointing figure for us as a commission. We must remember that this sector is crucial, as a large number of disabled people do not have the opportunity to secure the relevant qualifications in school. I think that part-time study is even more crucial—and sometimes comes more naturally—to some people in this sector. The commission has produced a report, 'Taking Away the Strain?', which reflects the changes needed in Wales in terms of reasonable adjustment within the further and higher education sector. I will not elaborate on the recommendations of that report, but it is available from us.

We support the suggestion that there should be a start-up fund to give people assistance, particularly if the information regarding the needs within the colleges has not been passed on. More often than not, the assistance is not available quickly enough and the assessments are not undertaken quickly enough.

Looking at training and education, the research

mae'r ymchwil a wnaed gan y comisiwn yn dangos bod 86 y cant o bobl anabl yn ei chael hi'n anodd i ganfod gwaith, a gwyddom hefyd bod cyflogwyr yn anfodlon eu recriwtio. Maent yn fodlon addasu os yw rhywun yn datblygu anabledd yn y gwaith, ond yn llai parod i recriwtio pobl anabl o'r cychwyn. Mae hefyd angen inni edrych o'r newydd ar ddefnyddio sgiliau sy'n cael eu mabwysiadu gan bobl. Mae gan bobl anabl sgiliau penodol o reoli cyflwr cymhleth, ac, yn amlach na pheidio, maent wedi datblygu rheolau gofalu yn y cartref ac yn y blaen. Maent yn rheolau ardderchog ar gyfer cyflogwyr, ond nid ydynt yn cael eu cydnabod ar hyn o bryd. Mae rôl i gynllun cyflogaeth y Cynulliad yma ac i ymgynghori gyda chynrychiolwyr o Gymru ar y cynghorau sgiliau sector gwahanol.

[258] Mae rôl allweddol yn y fan hyn o safbwynt byw'n annibynnol ac o safbwynt y cyfrifoldebau newydd sy'n dod i rym.

that has been undertaken by the commission demonstrates that 86 per cent of disabled people find it difficult to find work, and we also know that employers are reticent to recruit them. They are willing to make adjustments if people develop a disability in the workplace, but are less willing to recruit disabled people initially. There is also a need for us to look afresh at using skills adopted by people. Disabled people have specific skills in controlling complex conditions, and, more often than not, they have developed care rules in the home and so on. These are excellent rules for employers, but they are not acknowledged at present. There is a role for the Assembly's employment scheme here and for consultation with the representatives from Wales on the different sector skills councils.

There is a vital role here with regard to living independently and the new responsibilities that are coming into force.

[259] We need to realise the disability equality duty provides a pivotal anchor for us to take action forward. The duties themselves apply to the public sector, and disability equality schemes will apply from December of this year for local authorities. It gives us a unique opportunity to make these developments across the board and to secure, to use that horrible phrase, 'joined-up thinking'. In relation to independent living, we also need to look holistically at the experiences of disabled young people—at education needs, but also needs in relation to access to leisure, transport and issues around care packages in health and social services. Before closing, I will share with you the testimony of disabled young people. A number of people in the 'Are you listening to us?' testimony in 2003 shared with us the following:

'At the moment, I am doing work experience in Tesco. I don't like it and after that, I've got to go to either Kwik Save or Woolies, which I do not want to do either. I have told the teachers, but they say I have to go. It's nice of them to let us go to these shops. I want to work with the little children in the school or the nursery, but they won't let me, but they let the girls do it.

[260] Somebody else said:

'If a mainstream person went to college, they would pick what course they wanted to do, and if they did not want to do PE, they wouldn't pick it. There are limited courses for people with special needs, and they still have to do subjects that they do not want to do in school.'

'Since sixth form, my experiences have been bad. I am supposed to still have one-to-one support, but they sometimes use my cover to cover someone else, and I'd be left in the common room on my own to do nothing. Out of 10 one-to-one staff, only two are willing to change my pad. The others say that it is not in their job description. I am not supposed to go into the lift on my own, but on a few occasions I have been forgotten about and no-one realised that I was on my own.'

[261] The commission undertook research among disabled young people in Wales in relation to independent living, and I will share with you the following quotations from that.

'I was happy before I came away to university. I didn't mind my mum doing everything. It was what happened for 19 years. There was a girl who came at weekends, but that was very occasional and she only helped me in the house. Now I've got carers at uni who take me out to the pubs and

clubs. That is the help I'm really happy with. My mum couldn't do that for me. Now I don't think I could live at home again.'

[262] Someone else said to us:

'I had lots of assessments before coming to university. Social services did lots of assessments about what I needed in university, but when I got there, it wasn't useful at all. My social worker thought about what I'd need in my room, but didn't think about me going outside. They didn't think about how I'd go to the toilet in pubs and stuff.'

12.10 p.m.

[263] Another young person said:

'I was doing voluntary work, three days a week. I have been cut down to two days, because they can't afford my transport. My mum pays it all, anyway, and they pay her half back. It's a project about disabled students, and they want me to be the team leader. I can't do the work in two days only.'

[264] Another person said to us:

'I live in my parents' home, but have an extension and my own front door. I am here because of my college course, at the moment. My long-term aim is to move away and do Disability Studies at university. Access is the only consideration, not just where I live, but the environment and transport. I've got four universities to choose from, but it'll have to be the most accessible one, not the course contents.'

[265] We also had the comment that:

'I don't have the same choices about work. I want to get more experience of the workplace, but there's no funding for transport. I want to get into a network, find out what's going on out there. Most disabled people don't know about these schemes unless a social worker tells them. I want more disabled users' groups, like the young disabled network I'm involved with—they could tell more people about independent living.'

[266] The question is: are we listening to the views of disabled young people?

[267] **Peter Black:** Thank you very much. Are there any questions?

[268] **Janet Ryder:** One of the issues that has been raised, and that you raised in your paper, is the lack of transfer of information between one place and another. Do you think, having perhaps looked at some of the recommendations that we have made in previous phases of this inquiry, that any of that can be developed and help to support young people as in the transition into adulthood?

[269] **Ms Greagsby:** Earlier on, I was listening to Estyn's representatives, who made a number of recommendations, and I think that we could endorse all of those. The points that we are making today have already been made previously on a number of occasions and in a number of reports. So, I would like to highlight something from our paper, although you have already read it, which says that,

'The task of public policy at points of transition is to encourage, support, offer direction, provide opportunities and mitigate risks. It must fulfil this role seamlessly through the key points of transition. Failure to do so can see young people fall down the cracks between one life stage and the next, often never to recover'.

[270] Reading through the report, we have other phrases, such as 'a "pass the parcel" situation' for young people. These are young people in difficulty that we are describing as in 'a "pass the parcel"

situation'. We are looking at the 19-plus-year-olds and we are describing a 'cliff-edge'. All in all, we are really tackling a culture of low expectations, which we would call a 'lazy fatalism', which,

'means public policy and services fail to fully recognise young disabled people's evident disadvantage for what it is and so lack the impetus to act appropriately'.

[271] That is why we are here. We have all the reports and all the wonderful recommendations, and we would like to see some action.

[272] **Janet Ryder:** You have raised this point—one of the quotations that you read out was from a young person whose support worker was used in ways other than supporting them—but to what extent could we increase young people's ability to play a fuller role in mainstream employment, if individual support was provided?

[273] **Mr Thomas:** It is important that we get into a culture of support following the individual, and for much more consistency throughout these transition phases. The process, at the moment, is extremely disjointed, as we know in relation to the funding regimes. We know about the inadequate funding of, for example, the learning skills courses and the inconsistent approach to work placements, so there is a much greater role in relation to consistency. We have had a principle in relation to independent living where there is increasing use of direct payments, so that people can provide a more coherent form of control. So, individual budgeting may well be the way forward. However, for that to happen, people need to make informed choices, and that is why the recommendations made on information are so important.

[274] There are still inconsistencies. For example, we highlighted the case of an individual who was undertaking a training course who found that her learning needs were being addressed, but not her need to accommodate a personal carer while attending a conference that was related to her training requirements.

[275] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I agree with the final statement of your contribution, where you asked whether we are listening to young people with disabilities. I think that that is important, and I hope that, if we have not already arranged to do so during this stage of this review, we do so in future, because the examples that you highlighted have shown us that there is a need. We have a tendency to listen to professionals and assume that they have all the right knowledge and information. I am sure that this is true in many cases, but it is not always the case, so I take that point on board. Furthermore, I agree with you that we must look at this matter holistically. Having said that, I believe that one's employment and ability to earn drives just about everything else and is, perhaps, the single most important part of one's life. I am involved in Trinity Fields School in Ystrad Mynach, which has a good promoting independence project. I am a great supporter of that project, which takes a holistic view. It is not about promoting abandonment. It does not just say, 'We have got you up to a certain level; bye bye'.

[276] I do not know if you heard any of our earlier discussions with Estyn and Careers Wales. In a sense, it is a shame that you are talking after Careers Wales, as I would like to know a little more about the points that you made in your statement. I appreciate that there may be issues relating to confidentiality, but there should be more and better sharing of information between school careers advice services and Careers Wales. Can you expand a bit more on where that is falling down and where that could be improved in this context? You also mentioned the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report, which mentions self-esteem issues, parental expectations and how these expectations can be addressed, and the local context of employment and further education opportunities. By that, does the foundation mean that the type of training that may be offered to disabled people is often not appropriate to the jobs that exist? Is that what is meant?

[277] **Mr Thomas:** Yes, absolutely. We need to take a view on how things are developing in terms of local economies. We also need to think creatively about employment opportunities. There

is a growth in call-centre opportunities, many of which will be in more accessible buildings. There are opportunities for us to think creatively about niche opportunities for disabled people in terms of the context in which we work.

[278] In relation to the point about the careers service, we are not necessarily convinced that all elements of the careers service are aware of, and are abiding by, all of the principles set out in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. We want careers advisers in schools to go further than that. We want them to think about the latent skills that a disabled pupil would have and to think about how those can be marketed to employers. We need to have the intervention with employers to think more about core competencies rather than a straitjacketed approach to academic qualifications. We also need to think about that in terms of the way that, increasingly, stipulations for NVQs require initial academic qualifications that some people, because of the impairments that they have, will not necessarily be able to achieve. We need to be aware that, in years gone by, someone who might have had a difficulty relating to dyspraxia or dyslexia may have been able to go on to an apprenticeship without relevant qualifications. It is far more difficult to do so now, because you have to have four or five GCSEs. It ignores the fact that, once you are in that career, you will get the adjustments that you need through the Access to Work programme. We also think that careers advisers need to have more of a handle on supporting non-statemented as well as statemented children in terms of the transition interviews.

12.20 p.m.

[279] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Briefly, on that last point that you mentioned about entry requirements for NVQs, my understanding is that NVQs do not formally require entry qualifications, but they might be required by individual employers when taking people on for an NVQ or a modern apprenticeship. I suppose that that links into the issue that I have asked the other presenters about, regarding the attitude of employers and how we tackle it, particularly with regard to disabled youngsters. I am not talking about lowering performance expectations and standards, because if you are going to do a job, you have to perform to the same level as everybody else, but extra support may need to be made available. How do we tackle that, particularly given the nature of employment in Wales and the number of small and medium-sized enterprises compared with the number of large employers?

[280] **Mr Thomas:** Our experience has been that small and medium-sized enterprises are often better than the larger employers. In fact, we found that nine out of 10 of the small employers that we have interviewed for one study were willing to make adjustments in relation to the needs of disabled employees; granted, they were more willing to make those adjustments for existing staff who they were keen to keep in employment rather than staff who were being recruited anew. One thing that we found quite startling in the work that we did on the public sector with the social policy research unit in the University of York was that the growth in employment opportunities for disabled people in the public sector in England and Scotland outstripped the growth of opportunities in Wales six times.

[281] **William Graham:** May I endorse your comments about that most informative report? Some of the statements that were made were certainly quite provocative—it was well worth while. We all endorse the idea that people with disabilities should aspire to educational achievement and career development, but, in your opinion, what is the first vital step to ensure that that takes place?

[282] **Mr Thomas:** The crucial issue is one of coherence and having a much more systematic approach, which may be through some form of independent budgeting, for example. There are clear gaps. Some of those gaps are being filled, at the moment, in what we might regard as a haphazard way. For example, there have been significant developments, as was identified in an ELWa report in 2003, in terms of a more coherent approach to funding within the further and higher education sectors. We are beginning to address some of the anomalies, but clearly the continuum of support is very important—I would say that it is crucial. Informing disabled people

and their parents so that we can increase aspiration levels is crucial, because it is important that we do not lose people at an early age, for them never to return to education or employment. Enough has been said in relation to health inequality by various theorists, including Wilkinson and Bartley, about the life cycle and the important effect that it has on people's futures. We are all about preventing poverty and a lack of aspiration among young disabled people.

[283] **Christine Chapman:** In the section regarding raising the aspirations of young disabled people, you talk about the requirement for a number of key agencies and organisations to work together to communicate a much more positive message about young disabled people and their valuable contribution to society. Do you have any examples of organisations that should be doing that at the moment, but are not doing so? How can we address that? That would be a practical step to take, because it is not just down to your organisation to do this, it should involve everybody. However, the problem is that when we say 'everybody', we do not always do it well. Therefore, I wonder how we can think about moving forward on getting agencies to take this matter seriously.

[284] **Mr Thomas:** I think that there are some good examples around, particularly one relating to mental health, which is proving to be quite a difficult area across the board. We came across an incident when the college and various agencies were all working together to address mental health needs. That seemed to have an effective impact. That was featured quite prominently in the ELWa report, which is worth having a look at. There have been other instances where people have been successful at identifying need and that, in effect, has enabled people to feel confident about declaring disability. That is a particularly important issue for people with hidden disabilities. For example, work has been done in the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, where the proportion of disabled students has increased phenomenally through the active participation of the head of disability services there, Karen Robson, who many of you will be aware of because she was one of the co-authors of our report and is also the *Western Mail* Welsh woman of the year.

[285] One of the things that is emerging is a significant gap between the aspirations and experiences of young people who fall into the category called 'not in employment, education or training at age 16' and those of people who enter further and higher education, where support begins to emerge. We are now beginning to see an increase in inequality between those two groups of people.

[286] **Christine Chapman:** Thank you for those points. Are there agencies who should be doing this and who are not communicating the messages as well as they should?

[287] **Mr Thomas:** I think that there is always room for improvement. We have identified some issues in relation to the careers service and the problems that we have in relation to social services and finite budgets that we are all very much aware of. The consequence of those finite budgets is that support can be given, primarily according to severity of need, and what are ignored in that are the cost-effective interventions that can make a real difference to people whose barriers are perhaps easier to overcome, if I can put it like that.

[288] There has also been an issue about the joint working between education, social services and health. We have particularly tackled that area with Bill Caldwell and others in relation to the supply of specialist equipment and wheelchairs. There are still problems in relation to the fact that you can get some support in education but you cannot take that support away with you to deal with the cracks and the gaps, as Anne identified. So, for example, if you were to undertake work in the home, you would not necessarily have the same support as you would in school. Similarly, if you are undertaking a job search, you would not necessarily have the same support as you would if you were in work and getting support through the Access to Work scheme.

[289] **Peter Black:** Are there any other questions? I see that there are not. I thank you for coming in and giving us a very helpful and useful presentation. That is the end of the meeting.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 12.28 p.m.

The meeting ended at 12.28 p.m.