



**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, 18 Hydref 2006
Wednesday, 18 October 2006**

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

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

Aelodau Cynulliad yn bresennol: Peter Black (Cadeirydd), Christine Chapman, Jeff Cuthbert, Jane Davidson (y Gweinidog dros Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau), William Graham, Janet Ryder, Owen John Thomas.

Swyddogion yn bresennol: Dr Linda Badham, Pennaeth yr Is-adran Cymwysterau a Chwricwlwm 14-19, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru; Kevin Griffiths, Rheolwr Materion Prif Ffrydio a Thrawsbynciol, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru; Steve Marshall, Cyfarwyddwr yr Adran Addysg, Dysgu Gydol Oes a Sgiliau; Judith Nedin, Pennaeth Cynllunio Strategol a Chyllido; Julian Pritchard, yr Is-adran Cymwysterau a Chwricwlwm 14-19, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru; John Valentine Williams, Cyfarwyddwr Grwp Cymwysterau a Chwricwlwm.

Eraill yn bresennol: Mike Barker, Ymgynghorydd Cyflogaeth, Menter Cymru dros Gyflogaeth gyda Chefnogaeth (WISE); Keith Davies, Tîm Bagloriaeth Cymru CBAC; Ian Dickson, Cyfarwyddwr Cwricwlwm a Chymwysterau, Coleg Glannau Dyfrdwy; Christine Evans, Cydgysylltydd Prosiect Gwaith Ysgolion, Menter Cymru dros Gyflogaeth gyda Chefnogaeth (WISE); Huw Evans OBE, Pennaeth Coleg Llandrillo; Brian Lightman, Pennaeth Ysgol St Cyres; Kaynie McLellan, Cyfarwyddwr Menter Cymru dros Gyflogaeth gyda Chefnogaeth (WISE); Joe Phillips, Rheolwr Cymorth Dysgu, Coleg Glannau Dyfrdwy.

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, Janet Ryder, Owen John Thomas.

Officials in attendance: Dr Linda Badham, Head of Qualifications and Curriculum 14-19 Division, Welsh Assembly Government; Kevin Griffiths, Mainstreaming and Cross-cutting issues Manager, Welsh Assembly Government; Steve Marshall, Director of Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills Department; Judith Nedin, Head of Strategic Planning and Budgeting; Julian Pritchard, Qualifications and Curriculum 14-19 Division, Welsh Assembly Government; John Valentine Williams, Director, Qualifications & Curriculum Group.

Others in attendance: Mike Barker, Employment Consultant, Welsh Initiative for Supported Employment (WISE); Keith Davies, WJEC Welsh Baccalaureate Team; Ian Dickson, Director of Curriculum and Qualifications, Deeside College; Christine Evans, Schools Work Project Co-ordinator Welsh Initiative for Supported Employment (WISE); Huw Evans OBE, Principal Coleg Llandrillo; Brian Lightman, Headteacher, St Cyres School; Kaynie McLellan, Director, Welsh Initiative for Supported Employment (WISE); Joe Phillips, Learning Support Manager, Deeside College.

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

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.01 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.01 a.m.*

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

[1] **Peter Black:** Good morning, everyone. I welcome Members, officials and members of the public. I have some housekeeping announcements to make. If there is an emergency, the ushers will indicate the nearest safe exit. Headsets are available for translation and amplification. As usual, simultaneous translation is available on channel 1 and channel 0 will

give you the language of the floor. I ask everyone to switch off mobile phones, BlackBerrys or other electronic devices completely. I remind Members not to touch the microphones as they should work automatically. It will be particularly important in the very last item, where we have the video-conferencing, that you wait until the microphone comes on before you speak. It would also help the Record of Proceedings if you could do that for the rest of the meeting.

[2] I have had an apology for absence from Irene James, and Denise Idris Jones will be substituting for her.

[3] Are there any declarations of interest under Standing Order No. 4.6? Jeff?

[4] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I think that I may have a declaration of interest for the report on the Welsh baccalaureate. I remind Members that I am a former employee of the Welsh Joint Education Committee. That may also be relevant to other items.

[5] **Peter Black:** Are there any other declarations of interest? I see that there are none.

9.02 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):** As usual, I am pleased to present my report to the committee. The report covers specific areas identified by Members, ongoing programmes of work, as well as issues of current interest. I draw Members' attention to the launch of the school councils' website, which took place in Waunarlwydd Primary School in Swansea last Thursday, with presentations from school councils across Wales. The event marked the official launch of the website, the aim of which is to provide information and support to schools to help them to comply effectively with their statutory duty to have a school council up and running by 1 November. I was delighted to do the launch jointly with the Children's Commissioner for Wales. The website is available on www.schoolcouncilswales.org.uk or www.cynghoraauysgolcymru.org.uk.

[8] **Peter Black:** Thank you, Minister. Does anyone have any questions on that particular item? I see not. In that case, we will move on to the first item on the Minister's report, which is on school curriculum, assessment and qualification arrangements. Does anyone have any questions on that?

[9] **Janet Ryder:** We now have some detail on the statements that we heard a couple of weeks ago, but it is not actually saying a lot. On the one hand you say that work has been ongoing for a year, but you are also more or less saying that the review is about to commence. What has been happening in the year up to now? Also, what will we say to the students who are, at present, still doing the coursework? Given everything that has been said about coursework, how will we reassure them that that coursework is valuable, that they do have to keep putting the effort into it, and that it will be valued in their examinations? How can we reassure them that they are doing valid work and encourage them to keep doing that work until we see exactly what will take its place?

[10] **William Graham:** If people are receiving parental assistance and answers from the internet, and if that is given as the main reason for ending coursework, what evidence exists? Is it just anecdotal evidence, particularly in terms of the effect on grade inflation?

[11] I have failed to get my second question answered, so I warn you that it will not be an easy question, but if we are going to have more co-operation, how many children are educated in England and conversely in Wales? I was told by officials that this information is not held at source, which I find extremely difficult to believe, because every school must have the addresses of their pupils. However, I cannot get an answer from any of the LEAs on either side of the border. I do not know if Members would be interested in that, but if we are going to have more co-operation, those numbers must be known.

[12] **Jane Davidson:** I will first make some broad comments and then I will ask John and Linda to come in on the specific issues, because the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales, when outside the Assembly Government, worked on these issues alongside its associate body, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. It is important to say broadly that schools are free to choose curricula from whichever awarding body they choose in terms of any individual courses. We will all have taken part in award ceremonies in schools at which we will have handed out certificates. The vast majority of those in Wales will be from the Welsh Joint Education Committee, but certificates will also relate to other bodies such as the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance or OCR. So, the arrangements that must operate do not operate on an individual country basis, but across the whole offer to pupils across the countries that use those bodies for their GCSE examinations.

[13] We must remember that the coursework element was introduced around 20 years ago, following changes from the old O-level and CSE curriculum, in terms of moving forward. It is important to consider the beneficial aspect of coursework in terms of individuals being able to undertake their own study, which, for example, is an extremely important part of the Welsh baccalaureate. However, it is also important that there is confidence in the system among pupils undertaking those studies. We know that the system is strong in terms of the inclusion agenda and assisting pupils in tackling coursework issues and doing the work themselves—pupils who might not otherwise perform well in examination settings. We also know that, for some pupils who do not go into the examination room, coursework gives them the opportunity to achieve a grade and qualification. All these factors are important in terms of reviewing how the examinations system is being delivered and whether or not it is fit for purpose, which is quite appropriate 20 years on. That is why the proposals operate differently in different subjects. There was an immediate proposal on mathematics. Teachers were pretty unequivocal in their support for taking coursework out of the system, which is why there was an immediate proposal for mathematics coursework to end and new arrangements to be put in place for 2007, on an interim basis, until we look at the overarching curriculum issues.

[14] With other subjects, it is suggested that we need to take a different set of views according to learning outcomes. The key question is: what are the learning outcomes for young people in this process? So, different proposals relate to different subjects. We have indicated, in today's report, that our officials will undertake further substantial work with their colleagues across the border and with teachers in Wales before a full report on this work is made available in spring 2007, so that changes run alongside the new national curriculum. The third part of this main report, although I assume that we just want to focus on coursework for these particular questions, relates to the fact that there will be overarching changes to the national curriculum, which for the second time, the Assembly will undertake.

[15] **Dr Badham:** On what has been happening until now, as the Minister indicated, this is not a new issue. The review has been led out of QCA in England, working closely with its sister regulators in Wales and Northern Ireland. To give you some examples in response to Mr Graham's question on evidence, there is a report on QCA's website called, 'A Review of GCSE Coursework', which goes through the various evidence sources used to reach the conclusions on the difficulties in terms of help and plagiarism. We found that that kind of research has been backed up by our meetings with teachers, at which there was a great deal of

uncertainty about how much help individual schools and parents were allowed to give. It is not always the case that children are deliberately cheating, although that happens sometimes; it is usually quite innocent. They work collaboratively with friends, parents, and older brothers or sisters, whom they may ask for help. When does that help go a step too far? This is an assessment of what they can do and not what their brother and sister can do. So, there is both formal evidence, which you can read on the QCA's website, and evidence that we have collected by speaking to teachers in Wales.

9.10 a.m.

[16] With regard to how we can reassure young people who are currently in the system that their marks are valid, we have put in place some steps to give greater quality assurance to the existing system. This includes a leaflet to parents to give them guidance on what is acceptable and what is a step too far in support with regard to coursework. We have given greater guidance to schools, and awarding bodies are also putting measures in place to ensure that all teachers validate the work as really being the young person's own work. So, steps have been taken to make the existing system more secure. However, in the long term, the judgment is—and I think that it is the right judgment—that the system itself needs to be made more secure so that those who would undermine it are far less able to do so. That would give real confidence that these marks really are those of the young people.

[17] Finally, on the statistical question, I was a little surprised—although I am not a statistician—and I am sure that we can check this for you when we go back. We publish statistics for Wales separately from those for England and Northern Ireland. I can only speak about the phase that I know about, which is 14 to 19. We certainly publish how many people aged 15, or 16 at the end of the school year, are getting GCSEs and other qualifications. We know how many of those are domiciled in Wales, or are at least being educated in Wales, and how many of those are being educated in England. So, if you are asking about the GCSE year or the A-level years, those statistics are available for whole cohorts.

[18] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I take Janet's point that we must ensure that the work of those learners currently in the system is valued. In a sense, that is outside the issue of marking; it is about their efforts being recognised. I also acknowledge that people learn in different ways. Some may well learn by accessing the internet, others through discussions with parents or friends as opposed to self-study. All of that has to be taken into account in any review. Am I right in saying, Minister, that this is a significant issue for awarding bodies? It is important that our principal awarding body in Wales, the Welsh Joint Education Committee—hence my declaration of interest earlier—operates the same assessment regimes as those that apply to awarding bodies in other parts of the UK. The last time that I looked, the WJEC had more examination centres in England than in Wales. While it is not a matter of principle, it would be of significant disadvantage to the WJEC if it had different arrangements to those that apply to the English awarding bodies.

[19] **William Graham:** Thank you, Dr Badham, for the reference to the report on evidence. I will pass it on to the Members' research service so that it has the same access to the information.

[20] **Janet Ryder:** I am glad that you touched upon why that coursework was introduced in the first place; it was introduced to enable more students, who, for whatever reason, cannot perform in examinations, to succeed. Many universities now give their final year exam questions to students beforehand so that they can prepare and are well-studied. It is a difficult line to draw between plagiarism and research, because a lot of research is about researching and stating what other people have said, but then coming to your own conclusions. Plaid Cymru would be concerned if you were to say that, ultimately, this would have to change completely. We would be concerned if we were to come forward with an exam regime that

moved away from those research skills, because those skills are crucial to young people. If you talk to representatives of higher education institutions, it is those research and independent learning skills that they want to see being encouraged in young people.

[21] You talked about producing a marking system that alerts teachers to look at work in different ways, so that they can evaluate the work, and ensure that they are more certain that it is their pupils' work. However, if you are going to do that for coursework for craft subjects, which is what this report says—you will look at certain craft subjects, and retain that coursework, but change it, to ensure that people can have more confidence in the marking system, if it is a student's work coming forward, because in craft work too, you can see strong signs of parental help in some circumstances—I would hope that you would look at a similar system for other types of coursework and research work, because that coursework offers valuable opportunities to young people.

[22] The Minister said that there are two other parts to this item on the report, both looking at future reviews of current systems. Many of us would have been much happier had this announcement come forward in the way that items B and C—the consultation on assessment arrangements, and the overall curriculum timetable consultation arrangements—came forward. That should have been announced first, or even at the last committee meeting, when we were discussing A-level and GCSE results; we should have had some indication then. I believe that we would all like to know, having had that discussion at the last committee meeting, why nothing was said about this.

[23] **Jane Davidson:** Jeff's point about awarding bodies is critical. It is important, and it will be important in our discussions later on regarding the Welsh baccalaureate as a core and options model, that the options advantage our students. Therefore, we need to ensure that there is sufficient and similar confidence in how GCSEs are delivered in Wales to how they are delivered in England and Northern Ireland; I am sure that all committee members would sign up to that principle. That is why all the awarding bodies will be doing something similar in this context.

[24] Secondly, I agree with you, Janet, on the issues around research skills. That is why we lay such an important emphasis on the independent piece of research in the baccalaureate, which is greater than any piece of coursework that sits inside any current GCSE. Therefore, we as a Government, and I hope you as a committee, would strongly support how that is being taken forward, because that is such an important element in terms of that independent investigative element.

[25] Coursework is differential in different subjects. In discussions with teachers in Wales, for example—and Linda may wish to say more about this—one concern was that, because coursework is such a small element in many ways, it enables people to perhaps use others to assist them, whereas there may be areas in which, if you had a greater coursework ratio, it could then be tested appropriately by the teaching profession. There is strong support for coursework to be internally assessed by teachers, and we strongly support those sorts of arrangements.

[26] However, the important elements of this announcement are that, in business studies, classical subjects, economics, English literature, geography, history, modern foreign languages, religious studies, and social sciences, the controlled assessments should operate in terms of giving confidence in the system. This is where coursework is a smaller part of the overall examination than it is in, for example, the craft subjects. In art and design, design and technology, home economics, music and physical education, internal assessment should continue—that was clearly said—but with stronger safeguards. So, that is the territory that we are in now. We should all want to build more confidence in the system. We must ensure that that confidence is equal across the whole of the GCSE framework, but we must also ensure

that there are opportunities for young people to develop their independent research skills. By keeping the internal assessments with stronger safeguards in those practically focused subjects, we are also able to give more confidence to those involved, in terms of the delivery mechanism.

9.20 a.m.

[27] I did say in the report that we were somewhat taken by surprise by the announcement. I had a discussion with Alan Johnson on the afternoon of the announcement and he apologised profusely, because he had thought that officials would have talked to each other about it. The principle for this committee is the substance of the issues and how we move forward. What we are announcing, effectively—with the exception of mathematics, which is an immediate issue—is that there will be substantial work going on that will be reported to this committee, moving towards spring 2007. Once that work has been completed across all three parts of the UK that are involved in the GCSE agenda, we will be looking for new arrangements to be in place, as I said in my introductory remarks on these issues, to fit alongside the new national curriculum arrangements.

[28] **Dr Badham:** All that I would like to add is that, as far as research skills are concerned, we agree 100 per cent. They are desperately important. The Minister's report states:

'we shall safeguard the valuable opportunities and contexts, which these courses can offer for young people...for activities such as fieldwork and investigatory work'.

[29] That work will not disappear, but instead of being written up for the purposes of assessment without any supervision, it will be written up with supervision. That is the change. So, it is not that the investigatory stuff is disappearing; it is not—far from it. The opportunities for developing a wide range of skills will still be there across subjects.

[30] **Peter Black:** I am anxious to move on, but Jeff wants to come in.

[31] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I have a more light-hearted comment to make. We can say that if you copy from one person, it is plagiarism, but if you copy from everyone, it is research.

[32] **Janet Ryder:** Briefly, on that point, what kind of assessment are you making of the implication for schools and their timetabling, if that work has to be supervised?

[33] **Dr Badham:** Coming up with some concrete proposals about how this will be done and talking with teachers and schools about the implications for their workload are very much part of the work that is going forward. That is central to what is being proposed. At the moment, teachers have a tremendous workload in marking vast portfolios. If the assessment were done under controlled conditions, it would be time-limited, and the amount of marking that the teachers were faced with could be less, but we will have to look at that.

[34] **Janet Ryder:** I am not talking about the marking, necessarily, but the supervision time in the classroom and the resources available in schools to allow students to do that.

[35] **Dr Badham:** That needs to be discussed with the teaching profession as the work develops. We are looking for a win-win situation here, rather than imposing something unmanageable and unacceptable.

[36] **Peter Black:** I take it that 1(b) and 1(c) are separate from 1(a). My only question is on 1(c). The timeframe that you have for consultation seems quite tight. It is a large and sensitive exercise and it looks like it will have less than three months. Can you clarify

whether we will be able to scrutinise the assumptions on which the consultation will be based before it goes out?

[37] **Mr Williams:** As I understand it, the timetable for the consultation is in line with Welsh Assembly Government requirements.

[38] **Peter Black:** Is it a 12-week consultation?

[39] **Mr Williams:** Yes, it is. If you would like to know more than is in this report about the detail of what we will be consulting about, I would be happy to make that information available in ways that the Minister is agreeable to. This report simply details how it will be timetabled. The basis on which the consultation is being carried out stems from the ACCAC advice given in 2004. Nothing in the proposals deviates from that fundamental advice, which you will recall. However, if you would like further detail, we can make it available to you.

[40] **Peter Black:** I think that it might be useful to have the detail on that aspect in the next Minister's report. The report states that the consultation period will end before the pre-election period in 2007, which most of us would take to mean the beginning of March.

[41] **Mr Williams:** As you might expect, we took considerable care not to infringe on the purdah period, but the advice that I have been given is that it meets both criteria, namely that the length of the consultation is appropriate and that it does not interfere with purdah.

[42] **Peter Black:** My point is that, if you start in January and finish at the beginning of March, you are talking about a consultation period of only eight or nine weeks.

[43] **Mr Williams:** I am happy to check that again, but that was the advice that was given to me.

[44] **Jane Davidson:** It is important to say that the Assembly has been through this process before. We will have periodic reviews of the national curriculum, which is essentially what we are talking about. Those reviews will look at the Orders for the national curriculum subjects and the statutory frameworks for the foundation phase, personal and social education and careers advice and guidance. The point about the timetable is that we must ensure that the consultation goes out with the knowledge of this committee and its members. There will be an opportunity in February for the committee to make known its views on the consultation. However, while we are doing what we need to do in the run-up to May, officials will continue to prepare the work that needs to come back to the new Assembly with regard to the delivery mechanisms. The new Assembly will have to pass the Orders, although it will operate on a different basis because of the new legislative arrangements.

[45] Item B is incredibly exciting; these are the Doherty arrangements. Having moved from the point of removing the old standard assessment tests from the system, the process now is about how to move towards having the right types of moderation. There has been extensive piloting in schools. The process has been warmly welcomed, and we are now moving forward to deliver on the outcomes that the previous committee agreed with regard to making progress on the Doherty proposals. That consultation goes out at the end of the month and will run until January 2007. It would be useful, either through my ministerial report or otherwise, to have the consultation on our agenda once it goes out formally, in order for the committee to give its views on it.

[46] **Peter Black:** That would be useful. I wish to move on, because I am anxious to reach item 8 if I can. The second item of the Minister's report is the Dynamo 14-19 curriculum materials. I see that no-one has any questions on that. The third item is the launch of the national quality standards for able and talented pupils. That was not the heading on the press

release.

[47] **William Graham:** I welcome what the Minister has done on this. How many children from Wales go to the national centre at Warwick?

[48] **Jane Davidson:** None. It is an English centre.

[49] **William Graham:** Do we have an equivalent?

[50] **Jane Davidson:** No. The point is that the work that we have been doing with the National Association for Able Children in Education over the past few years, since early 2003, as is detailed in the report, has been, strongly, about the support for able and talented children in the classroom, and about finding ways of stretching them in that context. It is about taking a whole-school approach, the inclusion approach, and NACE strongly supports that. We have been very pleased with the direction that several schools have taken.

9.30 a.m.

[51] You will see in my report that, over the years, we first established the task group in 2003, and ACCAC produced some helpful guidance for schools called 'A Curriculum of Opportunity'. The task group wanted more guidance from the Assembly Government, so we then had some guidance out for consultation later in 2003 called 'Educating Pupils who are More Able and Talented: Guidance for Local Education Authorities'—one of our short and snappy titles. We carried on working with NACE to take that further forward. People very much appreciated the guidance, but they felt that we needed to do further work to ensure that we actually enshrined this in all schools, and I reported to committee on that work at the time. We then looked at the fact that inspection has shown that schools that provide well for able pupils generally provide well for all pupils, because they are demonstrating that they are able to support individual pupils more effectively. So, we funded NACE in the last year with regard to developing the quality standards, and they have been incredibly warmly welcomed. I launched the consultation on the quality standards developed by NACE at a conference at which nearly all local authorities were represented, and which was attended by speakers and others who have an interest in additional learning needs, and that consultation runs until 19 January.

[52] This is not in the report, but NACE also pointed out to us that it has been working with two schools, Tir-y-berth Primary School in Caerphilly and Treorchy Comprehensive School in Rhondda Cynon Taf, on achieving an award for going through the quality standards. So, those schools are demonstrating their commitment by changing their teaching practice. Tir-y-berth is the first school in Wales to go through the awards system, and Treorchy is just at the final hurdle. These are very important changes, because this is how we can apply it to all schools, rather than sending an individual child away on a residential experience. This is about how we stretch young people in our own settings. NACE pointed out that, for schools to access the new opportunities under the award system, it would have to train assessors in English and in Welsh to ensure that they could operate in its reward framework, and there would be costs for individual schools to participate in the NACE award, called the challenge award scheme. I was therefore able to increase the funding available to NACE for the next three years to ensure that 10 schools a year, without extra cost to them, can go through the challenge award. So, I think that people thought that the funding would enable individual children to benefit in some way, but that is not the case; it was an increase in funding to an organisation that we were already funding to develop these quality standards, so that schools can now pick up this challenge award. It is very exciting. We are looking at 10 schools a year and, because the amounts of money are fairly small, if we can remove that barrier to individual schools getting involved, I would look really sympathetically at more schools going through the challenge award, if they choose to do so.

[53] The funding breaks down as follows. A sum of £20,000 will give LEAs and schools unlimited access to the self-evaluation framework and other closed materials on the website. Normally, in England, that is purchased by individual schools, but we are providing that, so it is available to all schools. The sum of £22,500 meets half the cost of 30 schools participating in the NACE challenge award, and we are spreading that over three years, so that covers 10 schools a year at a cost of £7,500 each to participate in the award scheme, with £5,000 for the recruitment and training of 22 training assessors—one for each authority in Wales. This will mean that there are trained assessors in every part of the country who can drive this agenda forwards.

[54] One reason that this is so exciting is because it fits within that inclusion framework. We are nearing the end of the various consultations that will come together, and that major document will look at issues around how to support children with all needs in our school settings.

[55] **Peter Black:** Thank you, Minister. That was a very full answer to the question of how many children are going to Warwick centre.

[56] **Janet Ryder:** I am glad that the Minister has clarified that. There has been confusion, as £50,000 was announced in the press statement—or at least that is what appeared in the press—and people anticipated that that would go to individual students. How do schools qualify for this money? Do they apply for it, or are they chosen, for example? How will you ensure that you get a good geographical and sociological spread of schools?

[57] **Jane Davidson:** The organisation has deliberately piloted the scheme in Tir-y-Berth Primary School and in Treorchy Primary School, which represent quite a wide spectrum of pupils, socially. I wanted to give funding to 10 schools in the first year so that we could get that spread across Wales. Schools will apply for this support on the basis of being committed to taking this agenda forward at this point. We will strongly encourage schools across Wales to apply and, once the quality standards have been agreed, I will write to local authorities saying, ‘Here are the standards, we have put the funding in place, so please use this opportunity to apply’. So, in a sense, we are saying that there is funding for a minimum of 10 schools a year, to go through each of the years, but it takes time for the schools to go through this process. It is a challenge award and, therefore, schools need to change their practice in lesson delivery. There was huge enthusiasm for taking this forward in this way from local authorities at the conference.

[58] The other aspect was looking at how we can work with the university sector, because we have the new opportunities for higher education modules to be delivered in school settings. So, that was about looking at how we can work with the university sector in doing that, as well as at work such as that done by my local university, the University of Glamorgan, for example, which provides master-classes in mathematics to bright students from across a wide area of south Wales. We want to look at more of that kind of work so that we bring students into university settings and stretch their minds. So, rather than sending an individual child away, we are looking at ways in which we can be a small, smart country in taking this agenda forward.

[59] **Peter Black:** We will move on to point 4, which is the 14-19 learning pathways action plan. Does anybody have any questions? I take it that the end of line 3 should read ‘14’ and not ‘4’.

[60] **Christine Chapman:** Yes.

[61] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I have a comment, just for clarification. I am interested to see the

work of the ministerial advisory group and that of the project steering group. A critical issue for me is the involvement of employers. They have such an important say in the success of the 14-19 learning pathways that it is critical that they are fully involved at all levels. We had the unfortunate experience in our special educational needs review of the Federation of Small Businesses and the Confederation of British Industry feeling that it was not their role to give evidence, which I was disappointed about. However, in this, there cannot be any holding back. How well is the engagement with employers going at this point?

[62] **Jane Davidson:** I will ask Christine to respond to that.

[63] **Christine Chapman:** It is going very well at present. There is obviously still room for improvement, because we are looking at a major culture change with the 14-19 learning pathways. This is not about an initiative; this is real culture change. As you know, Peter McGowan, the vocational skills champion, is doing really good work out with the networks, and I know that he is meeting employers.

[64] Across Wales, we are already seeing evidence of some of the work with employers. We already have good vocational collaboration in various parts of Wales. There is a lot of information on the Welsh Assembly Government website, but I have a list. I was looking at this just this morning. In Carmarthenshire, the local network has piloted a Welsh-medium engineering project, which is being developed at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Bro Myrddin. Merthyr Tydfil has piloted a programme of vocational courses in four comprehensive schools for year 10 pupils; those are courses looking at construction, plumbing, hairdressing and childcare. A range of good things is happening, but Peter is now out there, working with employers, spreading these strong messages that it is about culture change, and we need employers on board.

9.40 a.m.

[65] **Peter Black:** We move on to item 5, and another ministerial advisory group on specialist panel meetings. I see that no-one wishes to comment on that. Item 6 is on the Wales Institute for Mathematical and Computational Science and, Minister, I am tempted to ask what 'stochastic analysis' is.

[66] **Dr Badham:** All I know is that it is something that my son does a lot of and he is an actuary. It is to do with quite complex statistical work, I am pretty sure.

[67] **Peter Black:** I do know what it is. Apparently it is statistical analysis that considers random variables of chance or probability and is used in regression analysis, or so it says here. Are there any other questions on that?

[68] **William Graham:** I greatly welcome this initiative; it has been pressed for by the sector for a while and I pay tribute to the Minister for doing it. It is first rate and, hopefully, it can be brought into effect as soon as possible.

[69] **Jane Davidson:** Thank you for that. We have reported previously that we have the Wales Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, we have a research and enterprise partnership between Bangor and Aberystwyth and Skillset Screen Academy Wales, so we are seeing some really exciting collaborative initiatives. Coming up are the Low Carbon Research Institute and the Collaborative Research Initiative: Engineering Applications of Complex Fluids at the Micro-scale, and I am sure that we will have more information and the detail on that at a future date.

[70] **Peter Black:** I think that I should record that I am a member of the college council of the University of Wales Swansea. Although it is not technically speaking an interest, I will

just state that for the record. The next item in the Minister's report is on the Primary School Healthy Breakfast Week, 16 to 20 October 2006. Are there any questions on that?

[71] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I am pleased to see this here. With Alun Pugh, I visited a school in Caerphilly to see its formal launch, which went very well. I am pleased to say that I understand that almost two thirds of primary schools in the Caerphilly borough have signed up and I hope that other local education authorities follow suit.

[72] **Jane Davidson:** The figures that we have from June 2006 indicate that 612 schools are now on board, which means 38 per cent of schools and 14,596 pupils in terms of that assessment week. We will be reviewing what comes on board as a result of this week. The challenge to authorities is to beat your authority, Chair, namely Swansea, which has really embraced this initiative in a major way. Having visited primary schools in Swansea and elsewhere, I have seen the positive effects of this scheme.

[73] **Peter Black:** Swansea has the philosophy that if you offer it money, it will take it.

[74] Item 8 concerns the delegation of 16 to 19 provision organisation proposals, which are quite important. This follows on from a previous commitment that you made and a motion that was taken up in Plenary. Do any Members wish to raise any questions on this matter?

[75] **Janet Ryder:** We are quite happy to see this going forward in its current form. I am glad that the Minister has written in a further safeguard, in that the First Minister will take the decision and therefore create that paper wall a little more. Would you confirm how these local reviews will take place? Are we going to see a continuation of the community consortia for education and training? Are they going to take them on board, and what powers will those groups have to recommend to authorities any changes that may need to be made?

[76] **Peter Black:** The future of the CCETs is the question that has not yet been answered in Christine's review. It would be interesting to have some idea of when we will have an answer about what is going to happen to those bodies.

[77] **Jane Davidson:** What we have described before is both the pathfinder view approach and the Estyn area review as starting the process whereby we would look at any major reorganisation of provision. If we go back to the fundamental element of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, the Assembly Government can only look at the reorganisation of the provision if it is in the interests of learners, and if it will introduce better outcomes for learners. The Act is quite specific in those areas.

[78] We will come back to you separately on the CCET issue, but it is rather more complex, because it is in terms of the relationship with the 14 to 19 planning structures at a local level, but you must also remember what we have consulted on, which has been broadly supported, namely the spatial planning structures. As the CCETs have substantial employer representation on them, it is about how that links with the arrangements in the new Department for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks. Our intention is to have these issues resolved during this Assembly term, so as soon as I can bring you the outcomes for that, I will do so.

[79] However, in one sense, these issues are discrete, because they relate to the commitment that I gave in terms of the process elements of how decisions would be taken. As you will see from the consultation responses, and I am also grateful for the engagement of committee members, what we are proposing in terms of the school sector fits with the broad support from the consultation responses, as does what we are proposing in terms of the further education sector. The safeguard on the delivery under the new arrangements by negative resolution is important, because in the legislation, in terms of changes in the FE college

sector, there would have to be Orders that would go through the Assembly. So, under section 28 you have those guarantees at any rate.

[80] I hope that we have been able to accommodate the grain of the consultation responses and our own views, and I think that we have reached a good accommodation together on these issues.

[81] **Janet Ryder:** I accept what the Minister says, but it is a very interesting area, because some of us have only become aware since last week that the Minister apparently has responsibility for economic inactivity, as well as skills. It finishes the circle, because they should lie together. If you are going to train people, one would hope that it would lead them away from economic inactivity. It puts an emphasis back on the CCETs and the high involvement of businesses and every stakeholder in those areas. Therefore, we still have the quandary of what a CCET does in relation to the 14-19 Pathways, because it brings virtually the same stakeholders together in that area to plan and provide for those 14-19 Pathways. That must surely lead into more or less the same work and planning that the CCETs are doing, because they must see that the provision is there, but on a much wider scale as it goes beyond the age of 19, if you look at lifelong learning.

[82] I would appreciate a regular update in the Minister's report as to how the CCETs are working. They have been criticised in the past because they have not had the power to do anything. Many people have said that if they had control of some of the funding, they might be able to do something. That the CCETs should have more control was an issue touched upon by a number of the respondents to the consultation. This is the way that the committee has decided to go, and I am glad that the Minister has agreed with that, but the overall responsibility must revert back to the local authority for control over the sixth forms, because of the implications for the rest of the school body. However, it is still important to balance that out with an area view. I appreciate that it is a very difficult balancing act, but can we have a further report to look at the role of the CCETs in light of the economic inactivity role, and the heightened importance that they will presumably now play for this committee?

[83] **Jane Davidson:** To return to the essence of the legislation for a moment, the Learning and Skills Act 2000 is clear that any reorganisation in post-16 education and training must be for the benefit of learners. We have all operated from that principle in trying to find a way through these matters, and you will also see from the way in which the report is presented that these are complex legal matters. As I say, I am grateful that we have found a way through this together in this context.

9.50 a.m.

[84] The legal advice also points out that the local authorities already had the power in terms of their own schools. The important element was to ensure that all schools could be looked at in the round in this context. That is where our discussions started, so we were all in easy and early agreement on these issues around the section 41 delegation for all schools. It can work across local authorities as well as in terms of the individual local authority, which is the other area that we wanted to address.

[85] There are elements of the previous ELWa system, as it were, in terms of regional statements of needs and priorities that are very important in terms of looking at how we take forward the employer voice and the links with the training and education system, as is the work of CCETs. We know that they work differentially across Wales. There is generally quite substantial support for the notion of looking at the spatial planning areas, but, as you say, we also have to look at the role of those older than 19 years of age and how we support them in a local as well as a regional setting. Those are the issues that we will be addressing when I bring forward the work on CCETs to you. It is my intention to come forward with that

probably by the December meeting. So, we will be looking at that this side of Christmas. We will be announcing the allocations of funding by the end of this month in terms of the 14-19 networks. We are reporting on that to you at the next meeting. The funding is in the public domain because we are moving from £8.5 million to £32 million, which was in the previous budget. So, we will be looking at making those announcements on those areas—the 14-19 network delivery mechanisms—at that time.

[86] Issues around economic inactivity are very important. You are absolutely right in terms of why I am the link Minister. In this respect, I am a link Minister, because most of the aspects of delivery in relation to economic inactivity lie with our colleagues in Westminster. In fact, many Assembly Members will have had letters from me on this over the years, because if you ask any questions on the role of job centres or the Welfare to Work agenda, my department always responds, because we know that the skills agenda is about the skills to lift people out of economic inactivity. The skills and employment action plan makes very clear our responsibilities and we published the first action plan over four years ago and proposed our second action plan last year. Also, in terms of the work of our ministerial advisory group, we have an employment advisory panel in Wales, answerable to me, which makes the link with the Welfare to Work agenda. That has been in place ever since I have been Minister. It is chaired by Ruth Marks, who sits on our ministerial advisory group in that regard. The responsibilities of all Ministers are clearly laid out on the Assembly Government website.

[87] **Peter Black:** Thank you, Minister. I am quite pleased that we have actually resolved this at last.

[88] **William Graham:** May I ask a quick question?

[89] **Peter Black:** Yes. We have time.

[90] **William Graham:** It is on the Minister's engagements. Does the Minister have any plans to meet this year's president of the United Kingdom Girls' Schools Association, who is presently the headmistress of a school in Wales?

[91] **Jane Davidson:** The organisation that I meet with is the Independent Schools Council.

[92] **William Graham:** Therefore, it is a 'no'.

[93] **Jane Davidson:** I have no plans to meet that organisation, because I have an annual meeting with the Independent Schools Council because there are matters for which independent schools require registration, and that is the only element of responsibility, as it were, for the Assembly Government in the private sector. Therefore, I meet the Independent Schools Council to discuss issues around registration, and that is on behalf of all of the independent schools in Wales.

[94] **Peter Black:** Okay. Thank you very much.

9.54 a.m.

Rhagolwg ar Is-ddeddfwriaeth Secondary Legislation Forward Look

[95] **Peter Black:** There are a number of new items on the forward look, namely the Smoke-free Premises etc (Wales) Regulations 2007, the Education Maintenance Allowance (Wales) Regulations 2007; the Assembly Learning Grant (Further Education) Regulations

2007, the Assembly Learning Grant (Higher Education) Regulations 2007, the Assembly Learning Grants and Loans (Higher Education) (Wales) Regulations 2008, the Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2006 and Education (Assisted Places) (Incidental Expenses) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2006, and the Children's Commissioner for Wales Regulations 2007. All those are highlighted in the forward look. ELL-29-06, the Assembly Learning Grants and Loans (Higher Education) (Wales) Regulations 2008, put in place the student support regime for 2008–09, but will not be made until after the Assembly general election next year. Does the list, Minister, helpfully identify those regulations that can be made by negative procedure, post 2007? It would be useful if that practice continued to assist Members. Does anyone have anything that they want to raise?

[96] **Janet Ryder:** I have a question, not on those regulations, but on the ELL-70-05, which is the Inspection of the Careers and Related Services (Wales) Regulations 2006, which come straight after the Education (Full Time Youth and Community Work Training) (Inspection) (Wales) Regulations 2005 in the document. There are no page numbers in the document.

[97] **Peter Black:** It is at the bottom of one of the pages.

[98] **Janet Ryder:** In relation to the issues that were raised yesterday regarding the full-time and community youth work and the Estyn inspection, I must admit that I was rather surprised to receive correspondence from Huw saying that they had not been consulted, because, having read the work that came through to Plenary, they seemed to be consultees in that. Looking at that inspection of the careers and related services, it says that only the careers service has been consulted. As this relates to the inspection of the careers service, I accept that it is perhaps something that touches on the careers service—it is not consulting on a change in the careers service or how it is offered in any way. Can the Minister assure me that she is satisfied that all those who need to have been consulted have been consulted, and that this did not need to be taken into schools for consultation?

[99] **Jane Davidson:** Thank you. I will write to the committee on that, although I will ask officials to look at that. However, as you know, we already have an inspection of careers services through Estyn.

[100] **Janet Ryder:** It has been raised with me that there has only been consultation with the careers service, but I am satisfied that it is only some impertinence. Minister, will you clarify that?

[101] **Jane Davidson:** Yes, we certainly can.

[102] **Peter Black:** If Members wish to raise any of these items of legislation in committee—for scrutiny, as opposed to general queries, which is what Janet has just done—you should notify the clerk and we will do that.

9.58 a.m.

Adroddiad Blynyddol ar Gydraddoldeb Equality Annual Report

[103] **Peter Black:** We have Kevin Griffiths here, who is the mainstreaming and cross-cutting issues manager for the Assembly Government. Minister, do you want to make some brief opening remarks before I ask Kevin to address the report?

[104] **Jane Davidson:** No, I am happy for Kevin to make a couple of opening remarks

about why it is on the agenda in this way, just to remind Members of our obligations.

[105] **Mr Griffiths:** Essentially, this goes back to a previous meeting of the Committee on Equality of Opportunity, where the equality annual report for the Welsh Assembly Government, or the National Assembly for Wales, I should say, was put forward. The Chair of that committee asked for the individual subject committees to consider the individual annexes relevant to that department.

[106] I will give some background on how the report was put together. Each department was asked to collate a sample, if you like, of responses relating to how it dealt with equality within its mainstream business for 2005-06. Those responses were given to the relevant co-ordinating division within the Welsh Assembly Government, and the report was compiled from that. I should emphasise at this point that there was no editorial control by our department, so what we gave to them, they put together. So, this is our chance to look over it again and consider what was put forward in the equality annual report. Ultimately, this will go back to committee next Wednesday, 25 October, I believe.

[107] **Peter Black:** Okay. Are there any questions?

10.00 a.m.

[108] **Janet Ryder:** I have a question in relation to the education grant for asylum seekers. The situation with the children of asylum seekers is moving quite rapidly in some county councils. I refer particularly to Wrexham, where there has been a big increase in asylum seekers' children. The fact that it is a back-ended grant, which I have raised before, causes severe problems, so would your committee like to consider whether the back-ending of that grant, instead of paying the money upfront, thereby quickening the regime of adjusting the system in some way to get that money through to counties, would enable the county council to include those children—as they are already doing—in a way that would not impact on other county council services as might currently be the case.

[109] What consideration has your committee given to the children of migrant workers? In Wrexham, specifically, there has seen significant growth in the number of children of migrant workers. Those children also come, in some cases, with quite acute special educational needs. That is having an impact on other services that the county council has to offer. On those groups being able to participate fully and in enabling the county council to help them to participate fully, would your committee also like to consider the situation regarding the children of migrant workers? I hope that the Minister, having heard that, will, likewise, consider the situation. Wrexham County Borough Council is the only council that I have been made aware of that is facing this issue. However, this goes beyond education into other areas and some of those children have quite acute needs. We need to ensure that the county council can provide an equal opportunity for all the children in that area.

[110] **Jane Davidson:** The grant is delivered to local authorities based on local-authority information in terms of numbers. Therefore, the grant is back-ended because it is based on numbers. I have indicated that I am reviewing, in a sense, the three grants in my department—the travellers grant, the ethnic minority achievement grant and the asylum seeker grant. They are set up for different purposes, but it is a question of whether or not looking at the whole sum of these areas gives authorities more flexibility. We will formally look at that relatively shortly.

[111] The children of migrant workers would not be covered by the asylum seekers grant, because they could go to any country in Europe. However, you are right to say that there are issues related to support and language support, for example. There has been an influx of children this year because, for the last two years, adults have come over, developed jobs and

gained security and are now confident enough to bring their families over. The Assembly Government warmly welcomes that.

[112] My division and I have looked, with the English as an Additional Language Association for Wales, at getting data on these areas. I will include further data on them in my ministerial report when we get those, along with an analysis of issues that we need to address to ensure that migrant workers and their families are made welcome and are supported. Several areas are covered by the Wales Union Learning Fund, for example, including support for migrant workers to improve their language skills in Welsh or English so that they can utilise those and other skills in the transport, tourism and leisure industries.

[113] **Janet Ryder:** There is no doubt that they contribute a great deal to these communities, but it has been pointed out that some of these children have other educational support needs as well as language support issues. So, when the Minister considers this, will she look beyond the language issues at a need to increase support for certain counties to enable them to provide everything that these children need?

[114] **Jane Davidson:** Support for children with additional learning is collated through the Welsh Local Government Association in advice to Sue Essex, as Minister, with regard to the local government settlement. It is, therefore, up to individual counties to make sure that any changes in the need for provision in their areas are fully reflected in that dialogue at the local government level. There are substantial considerations on these areas, not only in education, but in all services. In a sense, a child with a language need in a school in Wales would be treated no differently to any other child in terms of looking at their additional learning needs. It is important to say that.

[115] **Peter Black:** I see that there are no further questions. Thank you for coming along and for presenting the report to the committee.

[116] **Jane Davidson:** Can I just establish that Members are broadly content that the issues that we raised as a sample of activities can be reported positively back to the Committee on Equality of Opportunity?

[117] **Peter Black:** I assumed that that was the case. I am not sure whether I should write to the Chair of the Committee on Equality of Opportunity or—

[118] **Mr Griffiths:** I understand that that is the case.

[119] **Peter Black:** I understood that. I will, of course, mention the points that have been raised and say that we are broadly content with the one issue that was raised with you.

[120] The officials for the next item have not yet arrived, so we will take a break now and return at 10.30 a.m..

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10.07 a.m. a 10.35 a.m.
The meeting adjourned between 10.07 a.m. and 10.35 a.m.*

Bagloriaeth Cymru Welsh Baccalaureate

[121] **Peter Black:** Welcome back to the committee. The purpose of this item is to receive an update on the implementation of the Welsh baccalaureate, and to consider progress. I believe that we have also circulated an action plan from the Minister, which you have in front of you.

[122] I welcome Keith Davies, from the Welsh Joint Education Committee's Welsh baccalaureate team, Huw Evans, OBE, the principal of Coleg Llandrillo, and Brian Lightman, the headteacher of St Cyres School, Penarth. I will ask the Minister to make some opening remarks, and I will then ask our panel to introduce the assessment, before we go into questions.

[123] **Jane Davidson:** I am delighted to be here to announce how we will take forward the action plan for the baccalaureate. This paper notes the items that we highlighted in the report, and adds a timescale to each one, because we wanted to ensure that Members were clear about the roll-out of the baccalaureate, and the phasing intentions. I am also delighted to be joined by Brian Lightman, the headteacher of St Cyres School, Penarth, and Huw Evans, the principal of Coleg Llandrillo, who bring their experiences as the heads of two of our largest pilot centres. As you said, Chair, Keith Davies, the director of the WJEC's Welsh baccalaureate team, is also here to offer his expertise, because he has been driving this forward from the beginning.

[124] The paper that I tabled in the normal way, through the committee service, demonstrates how we have got to this point, and how the Welsh baccalaureate melds with our wider 14-19 agenda. It is important to reiterate that the progress of the Welsh baccalaureate has been monitored carefully through internal evaluation, by a team from the University of Bath, from the beginning. We have had positive feedback from the pilot centres—staff and students have valued the new styles of learning, the wider experiences, and the recognition of all the work that they do. The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service allocated 120 tariff points to the advanced level Welsh baccalaureate core certificate, which is equivalent to an A grade at A-level. That was a real benchmark of the Welsh baccalaureate's quality. Independent external evaluation by the Centre for Developing and Evaluating Lifelong Learning at the University of Nottingham, otherwise known as CDELL, has confirmed those positive messages, and we made those reports available to you recently.

[125] The clear message that we have heard from the pilot centres, UCAS, internal evaluation, and now from CDELL's independent evaluation, is that the Welsh baccalaureate is fit for purpose. I always said that I would need to have the evidence before we said that we would roll out the qualification. In light of all that evidence, I am delighted to announce that there will be a staged roll-out of the Welsh baccalaureate in Wales from September 2007. This will make the Welsh baccalaureate widely available across Wales, while also ensuring that training and other support is in place to ensure successful implementation.

[126] The action plan sets out how I will deal with the key roll-out issues—funding, marketing and elements of the Welsh baccalaureate structure. On funding, planned budgets already include additional funding, over and above normal funding, to ensure that adequate resources and support structures are in place. We need to ensure that teachers have the best possible training for coaching their students, and that the WJEC has the means to do this, so phasing out the roll-out will assist this.

[127] As Members have said before, marketing is crucial. We can have everything that we want in place, but the Welsh baccalaureate must be fully recognised, so that our students get the recognition, the learning opportunities and the careers that their achievements deserve. We know that that has immensely improved on the results this summer, but you will be able to test that with our guests, who run the pilot centres. We will build on the considerable work that has already been done. This includes proactive marketing to ensure that the Welsh baccalaureate is understood and recognised across the United Kingdom, and work on how we target employers, higher education admissions tutors and parents to ensure that they know that the Welsh baccalaureate delivers key skills and provides young people who are numerate, and can communicate, work in teams, use IT effectively, solve problems and work

independently. These are the skills that employers and higher education want. Members of this committee and the wider Assembly can also play a part in spreading the message about learning outcomes, because it is a positive message. Our learners deserve that.

10.40 a.m.

[128] In terms of structure, we will continue to monitor the Welsh baccalaureate, because no qualification can afford to stand still, and we had a partial discussion on that earlier. A consistent message is that experience of the delivery of the baccalaureate brings confidence and fuller appreciation. This and the Key Skills Support Programme Cymru will continue to support improved delivery of the key skills, which is clearly paying a dividend, as evidenced by Wales's outstanding achievements in key skills compared with other parts of the United Kingdom. I have reported on that statistical evidence to this committee before. We are already investigating—if we make that decision—how the Welsh baccalaureate core could be graded, and we are already looking at credit rating the Welsh baccalaureate within the credit qualification framework for Wales. This will potentially be a way to recognise partial achievement in the baccalaureate.

[129] Finally, the proof of the pudding—and I know that Keith Davies, in particular, will agree with this—is that graduates of the Welsh baccalaureate are, potentially, our best marketing weapon. There will be ongoing internal evaluation and this will give us information on how Welsh baccalaureate students progress in higher education and employment, on the effects of the Welsh baccalaureate on traditional patterns of study, and on issues such as gender balance in Welsh baccalaureate studies and achievement. So, today is an historic day for education in Wales. We are leading the way to a new style of learning, which I believe will be the envy, if it is not so already, of learning cultures throughout the United Kingdom.

[130] **Peter Black:** Keith, are you going to start?

[131] **Mr Davies:** No. I will answer your questions after my colleagues have done so, because they are the people who are delivering this on the ground.

[132] **Mr Lightman:** I think that I am being looked at. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about something that I see as very special. As headteachers, we see many initiatives come and go; we see good ones and we see bad ones. This is absolutely exceptional, and I want to spend a couple of minutes telling you why it is so special and why it has been so special for the students at our school.

[133] We wanted to go into the pilot scheme and were really enthusiastic about doing that at the beginning of the initiative, because it seemed to me, from the outset, that the Welsh baccalaureate did exactly those things that we were committed to as a school, but which were difficult to incorporate into our sixth-form curriculum in a way that was seen by employers, universities and so on as being valuable. These are things such as key skills, community service and the wider education that is not achieved just by doing two or three A-levels. These are the sorts of things that we feel passionate about. We were already doing a lot of them, but it was difficult to convince students why they should do things such as key skill qualifications when people did not understand their currency. So, we really wanted to go into that and we wanted something that was built on existing qualifications, because you cannot simply get rid of A-levels, which are a known quantity in all of this, and replace them with something different and expect employers, universities and so on to accept it. We were very enthusiastic about this and our neighbours in England have been envious throughout the process, as they have seen this developing and succeeding here. Today's events will no doubt support that further.

[134] The second thing is the way in which the initiative has been managed. There is an important message in that regard and important lessons that we should learn for the future. It has been a well-planned initiative and we must give credit to the Welsh Joint Education Committee team for that. Evaluation has been built in, but so has planning. In particular, we had a full year in which to plan the initiative before any of our learners were starting their courses. That meant that, because the practitioners were involved from the start, it was very much a bottom-up process, with heads of sixth forms and sixth-form subject teachers involved in the planning of those courses. That meant that we ended up with a really collaborative process that led to a high-quality product, which our staff were convinced about when it was introduced. That meant that we were on to a winner before we started. We had to sell it to parents who rightly and understandably questioned what it was going to be. It meant a lot of extra work, and students were asking what the point was in doing all the extra work. We had to be there to say that we knew that this was a good product and that they should believe us that it will be worth doing. So, the planning and management of the initiative was very important.

[135] On the impact, I have said before, and I will say again, that this qualification has done nothing less than transform sixth-form provision in our schools. Those are big words, but it has really transformed the quality of learning in sixth forms, the standards of achievement, the motivation of students and the whole culture. It has done so because pupils are now learning and seeing why they should learn all of the skills that every employer I have ever met has told me that they want. I am referring not only to key skills, such as numeracy and communication, but the wider key skills. I see our students standing up to give presentations in front of their classes about all kinds of issues, carrying out research, investigating what goes on in other countries and comparing it with what goes on in Wales. Those constitute really high-quality learning, and it is exciting to see.

[136] You can ask the students; they are the main proof of this. Ask them what they think of it. Many of our students have got up to speak about this in front of all kinds of people. They say that it has really helped them. Our staff say that they wished that their children were doing the Welsh baccalaureate because they have seen the benefits for the students that they teach. One student who left us two years ago came back and told us that he was quite shocked because he had no idea how few skills university students had. His university had asked him to spend some time training the other students—in the law department of a very well known London college—in order to help them develop the ICT and communication skills and so on.

[137] The other proof of this is the outcome. This is a demanding qualification, and I am pleased about that. It challenges them; it is hard. The students must pass everything to get through it. At the end of it, they have something worth having: a grade A A-level equivalent. Ninety students in our sixth form, out of a cohort of 112, achieved that qualification, and that is absolutely fantastic. They had to do so much work, and they did it because they could see its value. I am really pleased that it is being rolled out. I am pleased that the action plan recognises what we need to do. We need to plan it properly. There are all sorts of issues to do with ensuring that the centres, which are really champing at the bit to do it, are well prepared. I know that we will work together to achieve that. It is a fantastic opportunity for Wales.

[138] **Mr Evans:** I wish to echo many of the points that Brian has made. I am here today in my capacity as the principal of a large college, with more than 21,000 enrolments and 5,500 full-time students. That represents a certain experience for us in Llandrillo College. However, I am also here as a parent. My daughter successfully completed the Welsh baccalaureate last summer, so I have an insight from both sides that many people here probably do not have. The college has been involved in the pilot from the very beginning. We started with 20 students and this year we have 400 students involved, which is significant growth. We are operating at all levels. Approximately 60 per cent of our students are doing

the advanced streams of the Welsh baccalaureate, which means that they are doing A-levels or BTEC nationals at level 3. Twenty four per cent are doing the foundation level and 17 per cent are doing the intermediate level.

[139] We are also offering vocational and academic pathways, and what is interesting for Llandrillo College is the fact that the model has been tested, not only on the academic streams in the college, but also on vocational streams, including construction, travel and tourism, business, retail, information technology and hairdressing. We could take it a lot further, but that is the cohort that is currently involved in the programme, and it has been a success.

10.50 a.m.

[140] I will just touch briefly on some of our experiences, and some of the things that we have learned from this programme. Like Brian, we have learned that it is important that we make some of the pathways compulsory, once students have opted in to the Welsh baccalaureate. We do not believe that students should have the option to walk away from the programme: if your A-level cohort or your business programme is moving in this direction, they all go in there; otherwise, it causes problems.

[141] We also feel that flexible delivery is important. Although we have central models of delivery, we give staff the autonomy to deliver, for example, in hairdressing, retail or the A-level programme, because, at the end of the day, as long as the objectives are met, that is what is important. We feel that, because of the inherent differences involved in the programme, it would be difficult to take a standardised approach.

[142] We have invested heavily in staff development, because the success of any programme, as we roll this out, will come from the development of the staff. Very often, they are the cynics and the people who do not want to meet the change agenda, and we need to really invest and put money behind that as we roll the programme out. We have done it institutionally, and that has made a difference for us.

[143] Leadership is also important, and it will become really important as we move this forward. At present, it is the committed who are driving this programme. It is important that we bring leadership on board across Wales and that we make sure that they fully understand what is required and become committed. I am not just talking about the headteachers and the principals; I am talking about the course leaders. We are looking at an excellent programme in the context of student value.

[144] Continuous promotion is essential to make this work. I know that everyone is on board with that, but I think that it needs to be repeated. We continually, as an institution, broadcast, advertise and talk about the programme, and, slowly but surely, it is gaining acceptance right across our area of north Wales. We think that it is a very effective framework for curriculum delivery, which is working very well within a large, complex FE college.

[145] I will touch very quickly on some of the impact points. Given that it is a complex programme, there are many strands to it. We have invested heavily in improving student tracking, to know where every student is at any point in time. That has had significant benefits for attainment and retention, and that has really worked for us in the context of quality. It is also an effective framework in the delivery of key skills. Students do not volunteer for key skills, so there needs to be a purpose for them, and I think that this programme has given us that sense of purpose. For example, our hairdressing students this year achieved more key skills than any other hairdressing students in the UK, as I understand it, which is impressive to say the least. It is also a vehicle for mixing academic and vocational experiences, and our academic strands and our vocational strands have benefited from that mix.

[146] The value of the 120 UCAS points has already been touched upon and, this summer, for the first time, we have seen real benefits here, with students now moving to top-level universities as a result of the Welsh baccalaureate experience. I can give direct evidence in that regard. However, there is also benefit beyond the 120 UCAS points. Brian described those very well, but we are looking at breadth of learning, improved motivation, group cohesion and progression. So, those are the impact points, and the programme had had a significant impact. As an institution, we are rolling this programme out of our own accord. We envisage about 1,000 learners on this programme over the next three years, assuming that the funding is properly in place. That is the kind of target that we are moving towards. We fully endorse what is coming out of the action plan and so on in the context of partial accreditation and, possibly, the grading as well. I will stop at that point, Chair.

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

[148] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Like the Minister, I am delighted to be here today. I think that this is a very successful and positive outcome at this stage, and I applaud the work of everyone involved, particularly the learners who, as you say, are probably the best advertisement for the baccalaureate.

[149] In terms of its design, it was absolutely right, particularly at this early stage, that the established qualifications remained within the options, such as A-levels or the vocational equivalents, so that the students would have that insurance, should the baccalaureate not be successful, which is always possible when you are piloting something. The students would still have had robust and valued qualifications, and that was the right way to proceed. In time, it may evolve so that those qualifications may not be part of the baccalaureate and it may become a broader, more general qualification that can take over everything in that regard. However, that is not where we are, at this stage.

[150] I am particularly pleased with the success of the key skills as part of the core, because, in my view, key skills are the best means of achieving that link between the worlds of education and employment. Those are the skills that employers keep telling us that they want young people to have, and, through the baccalaureate, we are going a long way towards satisfying that request. It is very important that employers recognise this, and become advocates of the baccalaureate. I would be grateful to hear your comments on how well you think that employers understand the baccalaureate at this relatively early stage.

[151] I listened to the *Good Morning Wales* radio programme when driving in this morning, which reported that the announcement of the roll-out was coming today. However, only A-levels were mentioned; there was no mention, or at least none that I heard—and it was very early in the morning, so I could have missed it—of the vocational equivalents, namely NVQs and so on. It is critical for us to highlight that this is a broad qualification. It is not merely for gaining entry into higher education; it is a qualification in its own right and should be just as valid, if not more so, for those young people who choose to go into employment once they finish school, and perhaps into some form of vocational qualification afterwards.

[152] I have another specific question—and I am sorry if I am rambling a bit—which is, given the importance of the key skills in the core, how well do you feel that the Welsh baccalaureate could be mapped to modern apprenticeship qualifications, say? Is there any evidence to suggest that it will ease the path of learners, particularly those who may not achieve the full baccalaureate qualification but who, nevertheless, gather valuable evidence along the way of learning and who then become employed and want to take a modern apprenticeship? Is work under way to map that evidence to the requirements of, say, a modern apprenticeship or NVQ? Of course, the NVQ is a key part of modern apprenticeships at any rate.

[153] **Peter Black:** Who wants to start?

[154] **Mr Davies:** Perhaps I can answer Jeff. On 15 November, I will address the National Training Federation for Wales, because the association of private training providers will get involved with modern apprenticeships. I will be sharing that conference platform with Terry Wales from the 14-19 learning pathways project. So, yes, employers are interested.

[155] We have also set up what we call a kite-marking group. I think that it was Brian who said earlier that what has been good about this pilot scheme is that we have had time to work with centres. So, we are asking the kite-marking group to identify materials—that is, the individual investigations produced by students at the intermediate level—and to share them with employers. We know that we get all the publicity for the 120 UCAS points at university, and that is no longer a problem when you speak to parents. I go to parents' evenings and I do not have to sell it; I just mention what is happening and they are satisfied. However, the employers are a harder group to get at, so we are now producing these portfolios of work produced by existing intermediate-level baccalaureate students, so that employers can see what these youngsters are doing.

[156] **Peter Black:** Brian or Huw, do you want to add anything?

11.00 a.m.

[157] **Mr Evans:** Employers are, in many ways, quite fickle in this regard, particularly in Wales. We have a large number of small and medium-sized enterprises and small-scale employers, and it is difficult to engage with the totality of the employer network. Some very large companies are very much engaged with this agenda, but there needs to be a lot of work in the context of the roll-out, to engage with all employers. As an institution, we have a series of focus groups, on which the smaller employers are represented. There is a focus group for every vocational area. The Welsh baccalaureate has featured in those discussions over the past two or three years. Therefore, certainly in our area, the dissemination is taking place and, if that could be replicated across Wales, it would reach those smaller employers who presently may be denied access to that kind of knowledge.

[158] **Mr Lightman:** The best way of raising awareness—and it is already happening—is by giving employers opportunities to meet students. One of the most effective ways in which that happens is, of course, through one of the core activities: work experience. Those students go along and meet employers, and we get positive feedback about what they are doing.

[159] At St Cyres this year, we are looking carefully at how our key stage 4 students progress during the pilot of the intermediate and foundation baccalaureate, which has just started this year for year 10 pupils. Of course, we have high hopes that the same thing will happen with them and that they will have those skills, which they will take out. The other aspect is that one of the great benefits of the baccalaureate has been the way in which—and I apologise for using a bit of jargon—the students become more effective learners. They are better at managing their own learning and, because of the mentoring process and because they have gone through the baccalaureate's accreditation process, they know where they are going, and they are much better at making the right career decisions and engaging with the careers service when they come to move on. Hopefully, that will enable them to go into the right apprenticeships and to make the right decisions, and not just to drift into some course because that was the first thing that they thought of.

[160] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I have no problems with what has been said. On the point that you made about managing their learning, that is one of the broader key skills, so the very process of doing that contributes as evidence of that wider key skill. I also asked about the mapping of

evidence. If a young person does not achieve the full qualification for one reason or another, but has nevertheless done good work that would provide tangible evidence of skills, are there ways and means of mapping that against future qualifications, such as national vocational qualifications and so on?

[161] **Mr Davies:** Indeed. One thing that we have done for the Welsh baccalaureate is that we do not just award it once a year; we award it during both spring and summer. The reason for the spring award is that, after our first year, we found that some students had not completed it. There are 14 columns in our grid, and youngsters need to achieve in all 14 areas. As you said, not all of them will achieve in all those divisions. So, we have allowed them to come back into year 13, or the second year of a college course, and add to the qualifications that they have already gained. There is partial recognition and then they are given opportunities to achieve the full diploma at a later stage. It is incremental, in a sense; it is not all or nothing. It really is up to the youngsters.

[162] In one of our colleges, we had youngsters who started on the intermediate level and, after one year on that programme, switched in the second year to the advanced diploma, so we allow progression as well. We recognise partial achievement, we give them the opportunity to get the full diploma, and we allow for progression.

[163] **Mr Evans:** If I could just add to that, the credit initiative in Wales, by and large, is the answer to partial accreditation. That can easily be mapped onto the qualification, and awards can be given related to the credit. Within the whole 14-19 gambit, I think that we are in a fairly unique situation in having the baccalaureate and the credit situation moving side by side.

[164] **Janet Ryder:** I have a number of questions about this, especially on what will happen before it is rolled out. One question concerns something that you alluded to, which is the funding. In the studies that we have seen, there are questions as to whether it has been costed sufficiently. There are concerns from schools that perhaps the funding is not sufficient to put into the school in terms of what is taken out of the school's resources. Are you satisfied that if this is to be rolled out across Wales—the Minister has said that the money is there for training and other things, there is an increase in the budget, and everyone can see that—that the funding will be sufficient to enable a proper roll-out of the baccalaureate into all schools and colleges, and to put into schools what they feel they are taking out of their budgets to put into the baccalaureate?

[165] **Mr Davies:** For the present, we do not have a problem with funding. The pilot scheme was funded through the WJEC from the Welsh Assembly Government to the institutions, and we have had no complaint about the funding that they presently get. If that kind of funding is made available for the roll-out, I am sure that centres will be able to deliver. It is about all the different experiences that youngsters have, and one of the most expensive aspects of the Welsh baccalaureate delivery is the personal support that youngsters get. We insist that youngsters are seen every half term for at least half an hour to keep them on track. If they are kept on track, they achieve. I think that Huw said that we have made it compulsory to have personal support for them, and they have achieved, but the personal support aspect is expensive. However, so far, we have not had a problem.

[166] **Janet Ryder:** So, in looking at the budget, as I presume that you have done, are you satisfied that the high level of funding that went into the pilot scheme will continue as it is rolled out?

[167] **Mr Davies:** I do not provide the funding—

[168] **Janet Ryder:** Well, you can see the budget for the next three years.

[169] **Mr Davies:** That is true, certainly from my point of view. My colleagues will add their own comments.

[170] **Peter Black:** Brian, did you want to say what the impact on their budgets will be?

[171] **Mr Lightman:** You know that I love talking about funding. The funding has been at the right level for this initiative. It is expensive, and Keith has highlighted what you need the funding for. We have spent just about all of our funding on staffing or training, because they are the key issues. The vast majority has been spent on staffing. The reason why we have had the success and the pass rate that we have had was because of the investment in staffing, particularly the one-to-one support that Keith mentioned. You cannot expect students to find their way through all the different streams of the Welsh baccalaureate without that type of guidance. So, that must stay. If that level of funding continues, we will be able to continue with this model and continue to have that success. I think that it is a very worthwhile investment.

[172] **Mr Evans:** I think that we need to have a note of caution here. The pilot phase has worked very effectively because funds have been made available. It is essential that the additional funds that have been earmarked are allocated for the purposes of roll-out across the whole sector, which includes the school sectors and the FE sectors involved in this programme. It is also essential that the whole programme is funded, because within the post-16 college sector, this programme was initially funded by funding the key skills element. Many other dimensions to this programme were not funded, and it is important that that is recognised as part of the funding methodology.

[173] **Janet Ryder:** I have questions about two other issues. You have touched upon the issue that, in future, this may roll out as a pathway into higher education. In other words, you are looking at what will happen to A-levels in the future. We are aware that many universities still ask for subject-specific qualifications, and I am aware from communications that I have had with parents and pupils that it is creating some problems for students. You have both said that the course should be compulsory, so, presumably, you are saying that as this is rolled out, it will become a compulsory part of all sixth-form studies. However, for some sixth-form students who perhaps want or feel that they need to do four A-levels, it creates a pressure of work that is causing them not to fail those core subjects, but to not complete them. How can we cross what is quite a big hurdle? It is a big hurdle in terms of marketing this to parents, who still perceive the value of the old A-level system. This may well be the way to go, but there is a big hurdle to get over.

11.10 a.m.

[174] **Mr Davies:** When we set up the pilot, we had extensive discussions with the Universities and Colleges Admission Service. Its advice to us at the WJEC at that particular time was that most university departments will name two subjects, and the third or even the fourth subject is quite optional. So, when we set up the structure, the first thing that we did was to think, as Jeff said earlier, 'Let us protect the students, so we use the existing qualifications'.

[175] The second part of setting up the model was after advice from UCAS. To get the advanced diploma, you only need two A-levels and the Welsh baccalaureate advanced core. I was told last week that the University of Warwick's mathematics department wants four A-levels plus the Welsh baccalaureate in order to do mathematics there. I think that that is the admissions tutor, not the university. So, we have set up a higher education advisory team, chaired by the University of Bath and including representatives from universities in England and Wales to try to advise admissions tutors what the baccalaureate is about so that when they

make offers, they make offers that are reasonable and accept what the students are actually doing. UCAS told us that it is a big job for it, as there are some 9,000 admissions tutors. The complaints that we have had over the first two years have been few and far between, but they have come back to individual admissions tutors not really understanding the system.

[176] **Peter Black:** Do you want to comment, Brian?

[177] **Mr Lightman:** I think that that was a hurdle at the beginning, because you had a selling job to do to parents. I do not think that it is a hurdle any longer. I have parents coming up to me at year 11 parents' evenings saying, 'I want my son to come back into the sixth form so that he can do the Welsh baccalaureate'. The A-levels are almost secondary, because what they are getting through the Welsh baccalaureate is making them more effective at studying their subjects. Therefore, when they go on to university, if that is the route that they take, they will be better students. I think that there is evidence coming through and I am pleased that there is a long-term evaluation to get some hard evidence about that. So, I think that we are achieving that.

[178] We are also working very closely with UCAS and the admissions tutors at a school level. Our head of the sixth form spends a lot of time on the telephone to admissions tutors, talking to them about this, and they do listen very carefully. They very frequently amend an initial offer that might not have been the right one because they understand what the baccalaureate is about. The UCAS standing committee has discussed the Welsh baccalaureate a few times and it is coming to our school later this term to have a whole day looking at it at a school level.

[179] **Janet Ryder:** In relation to that, what reaction have you had from specific organisations such as Cardiff Medical School? Has it fully accepted this?

[180] **Mr Davies:** Cardiff Medical School was the first medical school to say, 'If you have the Welsh baccalaureate and an A-level in chemistry and physics, we will accept you'. It has been very good; in fact, Cardiff Medical School produced an article for the medical schools journal—I cannot remember the name of the journal—on the Welsh baccalaureate and why it was supporting it.

[181] **Mr Evans:** We had a student this summer who did three A-levels with us and wanted to study law. She did three A-levels plus the Welsh baccalaureate as part of the framework. She wanted to study law at Manchester University, and she was asked for three As with consideration for the Welsh baccalaureate. She eventually achieved two As and a B. The university then turned to the Welsh baccalaureate and admitted her. In other words, they were using it as a fourth A-level. So, it really did have an impact on a top UK university for a top course demanding high qualifications. That is the reality of the situation that we are now in. We have now passed on from some of the earlier debates that we have had, which we have had at our college.

[182] **Mr Davies:** To add one more point, in the early years we asked for support to run a conference for admissions tutors. We have run two successful ones, and we are hoping to run a third in the north-west, in order to catch the north-west universities. In the first one, the strength of the conference, which we called 'Bac on the Bay', was that we had students from our centres talking about their experiences. I remember the admissions tutor from Oxford saying to me at the end of the conference that Oxford would accept the Welsh baccalaureate. She said that some admissions tutors would still demand to get their three As in particular subjects, but the Oxford admissions book states that it welcomes the Welsh baccalaureate, and that is a direct result of that admissions tutor talking to students. So, if we can get hold of the admissions tutors individually, there is no problem.

[183] **Janet Ryder:** As you have left the north-west to the last, it could be where some of my problems are coming from. My son is in a pilot school and I have had concerns raised with me by parents. The majority of those children feed into the north-west universities, not Cardiff, unfortunately, so there is an issue there.

[184] You talked about the work experience element. There have been questions about the quality of the work experience that pupils get for many years. Are you satisfied that you have sufficient work experience opportunities coming forward? How are you developing them to ensure that you are able to accommodate all kinds of students' aspirations, especially if you roll it out into more rural areas, rather than urban areas?

[185] **Mr Evans:** We have 400 students studying the Welsh baccalaureate and they are all following work experience routes. We sometimes accredit what they are already doing, because many of those students—especially post 16—will be doing relevant work experience, as many of them are working these days. If appropriate, we accredit that as part of their work experience pathway. We are also turning to a whole range of different kinds of organisations to bring about work experience. My daughter, for example, did her work experience with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which is not an area that she was familiar with, because it was totally different.

[186] We are moving into the voluntary sector for work experience opportunities, which is working well, even in a quasi-rural area.

[187] **Mr Davies:** One of our requirements is that the pupils get involved in the community, and quite often, they look at their work experience, they look at the community participation requirement, and merge the two. So one of the youngsters who was interviewed on BBC Wales this morning did work experience at Craig-y-Parc special school in south Glamorgan. So we are encouraging them to look at the kinds of things that Huw is talking about.

[188] **Christine Chapman:** When I came to your school, Brian, I met some of the students who were doing the Welsh baccalaureate. I also went to Pen y Dre school in Merthyr, and I was absolutely inspired by the experiences that they have had. That was a while ago now, but the sorts of things that the Welsh baccalaureate is doing gives young people confidence. We now know that it is not just a traditional qualification, and it will make a difference to young people's lives, so I was inspired.

[189] You mentioned leadership, Huw, and you said that currently you have committed people leading this, but with the roll out we are looking at getting other staff involved. Do you foresee any difficulties in capturing the hearts and minds and commitment of other staff who will now have to do it as part of their job?

[190] **Mr Evans:** That is a sensitive question. I do not envisage problems if it is handled properly. People have to be brought on board. People have to understand the benefits, and I am not just talking about principals and headteachers, but course tutors, subject heads, and all of those people who are involved in rolling out this programme. I do not think that we can assume that just one notification will do the trick. There needs to be a concerted effort to gear Wales up to this roll out.

[191] **Mr Lightman:** I would like to echo that, and that is why the training is so important. It is a difficult initiative to manage and it needs very careful planning, which is what we have been able to do. We have had to cross those hurdles in school, because we have all our different departments and we have had to convince them that it is worthwhile, and they are now convinced. We must help the new schools coming into the roll-out. That is why I am keen on the idea of a gradual roll-out; it will give us a chance to share experiences and the pilot centres can play a part in that.

11.20 a.m.

[192] **Mr Davies:** This is a particularly good time to do so. I will talk to the headteachers of Gwynedd and Anglesey next Tuesday, and three of our existing pilot schools will also be telling their colleagues how they are delivering the Welsh baccalaureate in their schools. The biggest selling point for us now is to get experienced teachers, who deliver the baccalaureate, to talk about the successes and convince others that it is worth them following this path.

[193] **William Graham:** Many people will know that I maintain a sceptical approach—healthy, I trust—but I am grateful for your evidence today, because it is quite remarkable in many ways. I acknowledge, and this comes through often—and I know that Jeff is keen on this—the vocational and key skills element of the baccalaureate. That is valid, along with the incremental progression, which must help.

[194] However, we were told last term by Estyn that the drop-out rate was high, which might be a little premature, but no doubt we will learn more of that as time goes on. We also learnt of the reluctance of some universities about the Welsh baccalaureate, as you touched on today. On those students who take the academic route, in terms of the balance of their time, if you are talking of the baccalaureate as being a third or fourth A-level where universities particularly want those core subjects, how does that pan out in your experience?

[195] **Mr Lightman:** That is not a problem. If I look to the pre-baccalaureate days, one of the problems was that sixth formers sometimes had too much time on their hands. They were not being helped. They are only 16-years-old, and they need to learn how to learn effectively and how to use their time. They now have a manageable timetable and they have to work hard, but why should they not work hard? They are going for advanced qualifications and they want to go university, so that is quite possible.

[196] However, the other aspect of this is that it is not like a separate course. There is a core element when, during certain periods of the week, you are doing certain core activities for the Welsh baccalaureate, but much of that is in the course of whatever subjects they are studying. So, if you take, for example, someone who is studying Geography to A-level, a research project that sticks in my mind is a study of Cardiff bay as part of the project. Students do a piece of research into, for example, Sydney bay or the Big Dig in Boston or somewhere similar. They compare Cardiff bay with such places and therefore undertake a piece of quite in-depth research. They then present that to their class as part of their A-level lesson. How often have you seen in a school report, 'Needs to read around the subject'; we have had to persuade them to do that. This shows them what that means and how to study something in depth. So, I do not think that there is a problem with that.

[197] On the drop-out rate, this is a demanding qualification and if you get the guidance right and you help them through the process, they will not drop out. Some will not necessarily complete the entire course, but if we want it to be demanding and the best and if we have high aspirations for education in Wales, then we have to accept that this will be demanding and that people must rise to that challenge. We will overcome that.

[198] **Mr Davies:** We are investigating the drop-out rate, if that is the term to use, because, in some of our centres, the programme is compulsory, but achieving the Welsh baccalaureate advanced diploma is not compulsory. They go as far as they want to go—this is the incremental part. Even though they do not complete the Welsh baccalaureate advanced diploma, they get two, three or four key skills. So, they get something at the end of it. Even if they leave during those two years, they have achieved something that they would not have had if they were not following the Welsh baccalaureate programme.

[199] **Mr Evans:** The time gap is not an issue on academic programmes, if I am honest. There is plenty of time within the curriculum for this kind of activity. It is more of an issue on vocational level 3 programmes, because these are more demanding with regard to time as they involve more tuition and so on. We have to work closely with tutors to fit in the baccalaureate programmes. We can do it by carefully dovetailing and overlapping what they are doing already. However, that is where the tension is.

[200] I think that the explanation has been given on retention, which is why I focused in on tracking. It is an issue of tracking individual students and this is what staff need to be trained in. It does not come easily, but if someone knows exactly where a student is up to with their learning programme, something can be done about it if they begin to fall behind. So, it is individualised learning and responding to that individualised learning. Then, you can overcome that issue.

[201] **Mr Davies:** We are on learning programmes and that very point was made to me in one of our learning centres yesterday. It has been running the baccalaureate for only a year and had not realised how important tracking was. We asked how it went last year and what it is changing for this year. Last year, it had difficulty with keeping track of where the students are, because of the number of requirements across this extensive programme.

[202] **Mr Evans:** It is a demanding programme.

[203] **Jeff Cuthbert:** You mentioned school reports. If I remember correctly, the commonest word on my school reports was 'hopeless'.

[204] **William Graham:** There is no change there, then.

[205] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you very much.

[206] On the issue of drop-out rates, I am not surprised that, during the pilot phase, we experience a degree of drop-out, because it is a new qualification. We have never suggested that the Welsh baccalaureate will be right for all learners—that clearly would not be the case. It is reasonable that those who will try it may not fully understand the implications and there will be a number who decide that it is not for them and, for one reason or another, will drop out. However, in the fullness of time, we will have the foundation and intermediate stages running as well. I anticipate that, with that joined-up method of learning, the issue of drop-outs will become negligible. Do you agree with that?

[207] **Mr Davies:** I would certainly agree with that. We have talked about it being a demanding programme and we are talking about the 16-19 pilots. However, 18 of the 31 pilots are now involved in piloting the foundation and intermediate stages at key stage 4. Some of those are modelling their structures to look at learning pathways and are starting to deliver key skills at key stage 4. At two of the centres that I have visited within the last fortnight, youngsters have already achieved some key skills at key stage 4, though not all of them. However, it is about progression. It will be much easier for youngsters coming on board post-16 if they have been following a learning pathway pre-16.

[208] **Mr Evans:** What you have said there overcomes the problem in some ways, because of the progression. However, differentiation is also important. The only thing that worries me slightly is that we spend a little bit more time differentiating the various levels of key skills that are required so that people do not duplicate. In a college environment, students frequently progress, certainly from foundation level through to intermediate level and then to advanced level. So, they must not be repeating themselves. I know that work is ongoing in that area.

[209] **Jane Davidson:** I would like to make four points from the Government's perspective.

[210] **Peter Black:** If you can do it in two minutes.

[211] **Jane Davidson:** Yes, thank you.

[212] First, mainstreaming between 14-19 learning pathways and the Welsh baccalaureate has only just been touched upon, but it is crucial, because it is about foundation, intermediate and advanced levels, whereas most of the discussions that have taken place have been about the advanced level. There is discrete funding to take it forward. We are talking about a model that retains additional funding and the personal support will be mainstreamed through 14-19 as we also roll out the learning pathways agenda. So, the two things dovetail.

[213] The second point relates to the phased roll-out and gearing Wales up to the challenge. There are schools and colleges waiting in the wings to do this—as Brian well knows, because people are knocking on his door wanting to be in the next tranche. We have made a commitment in ‘The Learning Country’ for 25 per cent by 2010. We will be supportive in taking forward this agenda to meet that obligation.

11.30 a.m.

[214] Thirdly, William, I am grateful for your comments. If you or I were to ask employers what they wanted out of a qualifications system, they would say that they wanted people who can undertake individual investigations, who have numeracy, literacy, and ICT skills, and who are good at team working and problem solving. If we say that we are providing a qualification that gives them all of that, they say, ‘Great, thanks, when can we have it?’. We then say that that is what the Welsh baccalaureate is, and it starts to make sense. My dialogue with the Sector Skills Councils has been interesting; they are enthused about this, because they can see that what they are asking for is being delivered through the Welsh baccalaureate. Therefore, I am pleased to hear you say today that the evidence is overcoming your previous scepticism, as it has done for many parents in this process; the evidence has overcome their scepticism, because they are now seeing that their children can get into top-grade universities because of the Welsh baccalaureate, not despite of it. That is where the demonstration lies.

[215] Finally, because it is part of the 14-19 agenda, and because of the credit and qualifications framework and the accredited prior learning, the credits system enables the recognition in an accumulative way, which is revolutionary. This will mean that only in Wales will students, from next year onwards, be able to demonstrate that they have the skills that employers and universities want, and they will have them before the end of statutory education—between 14 and 16—and not just post-16. Therefore, it is a fantastic day for Wales.

[216] **Peter Black:** Thank you, Minister. I thank you all for coming along and giving evidence today. It has been a useful session, and has hopefully widened our knowledge of the Welsh baccalaureate and how it is being rolled out.

11.32 a.m.

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

[217] **Peter Black:** For this item, we have representatives from the Welsh Initiative for Supported Employment, who will give evidence. I apologise for the delay; we were meant to change things around during the break, but because we took our break early, the seamless transition did not work. Hopefully, we will now talk about another form of seamless transition. I welcome Kaynie McLellan, the director of the Welsh Initiative for Supported

Employment, Mike Barker, a WISE employment consultant, and Christine Evans, a WISE schools work project co-ordinator. I hope that I got all that right. I remind you that there will be a verbatim record of this meeting, which will appear on the Assembly's website and the committee's webpages in due course. Obviously, you will get a chance to see that. I ask you to make some opening remarks before we go on to ask questions.

[218] **Ms McLellan:** I prepared a handout about WISE, but I do not know whether it is among your papers. Thank you for the opportunity to come to talk to you today. I will summarise what WISE is. We are a supported employment agency. We were set up in 1984, and because we were the first supported employment agency in Wales, set up by the parents of people who had a learning disability, we called ourselves the Welsh Initiative for Supported Employment. However, now there are over 20 supported employment agencies throughout Wales, so, fortunately, we are no longer unique and there is an association of supported employment agencies.

[219] As far as WISE is concerned, we use a technique called systematic instruction, which means that we train people on a one-to-one basis in the workplace and we work entirely with people who have a learning disability. They may have associated physical disabilities or they may have mental health issues, but they are principally people with a learning disability. We are funded through a variety of sources—social services in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot fund us, we have money from Europe, Children in Need and the lottery, and there is a whole patchwork of other funding. As you can imagine, that is hand-to-mouth living in many ways, but it is typical of the community and voluntary sector.

[220] We have had an Estyn inspection as part of our workstep programme, and we were pleased to be given a grade 1 for the support that we offered to young people and older adults going into employment. That was part of an inspection that covered the whole of the agency as well as the workstep programme. The organisation also has an Investors in People award and we have been running a schools work project since 1997. That is the background of WISE, but I am sure that you will have questions to ask on that.

[221] I will move on to the schools work project, because that is the transition work that we do. After we had been working for about 10 years, we realised that people were coming through to us without any work experience at all. There were people in their late 20s or early 30s who were desperately seeking employment, but had no idea what going to work entailed, because many of them would have been in a day service and would not have had an opportunity to do so. We realised at that point that, in order to get people on a level playing field with other non-disabled young people, they should have the same opportunities of work experience while they were at school. From that point on, at least they had the opportunity to make some informed choices.

11.40 a.m.

[222] For students with a learning disability, we recognised that early intervention was critical. We needed money, because, at the time, we did not have enough to work specifically with young people, because we were funded for adult services only. So, we turned to the lottery and other trusts, as we do. Since 1997, we have had funding. First, it was for Christine's post, and now we have two officers who work with young people between the ages of 14 and 19. Christine can explain later in more detail how the project works, if you would like to ask questions about that. Basically, young people are taken to ordinary workplaces in the community and given the opportunity with one-to-one support throughout the placement to try out a job of their choice. The result is that not only their expectations but those of their parents are raised and so are the expectations of those all around them. They find that there is an alternative future and that it does not have to be a day service.

[223] However, there is a long and winding road to employment. If you are lucky and you finish on the schools work project you might get a Saturday job, but obviously employers will only take people over the age of 16 or 17. Therefore, for that age group, getting directly into work is probably not very common. Generally, people will go on to colleges of further education. A few people will have work experience. In our experience, seven years later, people will emerge who started on the schools work project, and they will finally be referred to us by the disability employment advisor at the job centre. They might be referred to WISE for a programme called work preparation, which is funded by Jobcentre Plus and allows people to have 30 days of work experience. We use the same model, which is one-to-one support and training in the workplace on the work preparation programme. Quite often, for young and older people, that will lead to the workstep programme, which is also funded by Jobcentre Plus and allows us to put ongoing support into the job where the person is placed. For people who have left college and gone to day services, we are funded by social services to provide supported employment.

[224] I am aware that you have received a presentation by Andrea Wayman from Elite. Andrea and I co-chair the Welsh Association for Supported Employment Agencies. Therefore, it is possible that you all now know as much about supported employment as I do. It is all about mainstream, paid employment in non-segregated settings for people with disabilities. The process begins with a vocational profile. Mike is very involved with the vocational profiling system, which we also use in a low-key way with young people in school. Following the vocational profiling, an action plan is drawn up, and Mike and other colleagues will canvass for a good job match. Sometimes we use a process called job carving, which means that items within a job description are amalgamated to make a complete job that someone with a learning disability could perform.

[225] A job trainer or job coach will then meet with the employer, prepare a job analysis and learn the job themselves. They will accompany the person with the learning disability to the workplace, providing them with one-to-one support. That means that the employer does not have to put a lot of time into training someone who is a slow learner. The fact that we have job coaches is a big selling point. When the person is working to the standard that the employer is happy with, the job coach will gradually phase out their support. However, WISE will remain in the background and maintain contact for as long as the employer and the young employee are interested in our being around.

[226] On opportunities for employment, we work mostly with the service sector, so we are talking about entry-level jobs—catering, cleaning, some office work, garage work, gardening work and factory work. We find that nursing homes often have cleaning and gardening vacancies. Fast-food outlets such as McDonald's, Burger King and Costa Coffee offer catering work. Well-known high-street names are employing people with learning disabilities. The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency offers office work, and we are lucky to have a big organisation locally. It has a very good policy of equality, but it can take a long time to get in there. We now have a man working as a messenger there. One lady is working in the offices in a comprehensive school. There is work in garages, a car-valeting factory and, as I just mentioned, a couple of factories in Swansea.

[227] In order to keep this fairly short and sweet, I will just say that we would like people to have choices; college need not be the only option for those aged 16. For some people, the supported employment route is a more direct, immediate and successful way of learning. It is a different way of learning. It places people in the job and trains them there, rather than training them prior to placement and then placing them. People with learning disabilities often have difficulty transferring skills from one environment to another, and we have found that this is a particularly powerful way of learning for people who have a learning disability. So, what I am recommending is that supported employment is an interesting option for young people aged between 16 and 18, and older, and what we hope for all of them is that they get

real jobs for real pay.

[228] I know that I only had five minutes, so I hope that I have not exceeded that by too much.

[229] **Peter Black:** Thank you very much. Does anybody have any questions?

[230] **Janet Ryder:** First, on the employment opportunities, are you satisfied that there is enough variety and that employers are happy to offer employment placements?

[231] **Ms McLellan:** We have always had a good relationship with employers. Mike comes from a Jobcentre Plus background and he was, in fact, the marketing director for Jobcentre Plus, so we were quite pleased to have poached him.

[232] **Mr Barker:** We are quite fortunate that we have been going for 22 years, so, over that time, we have built good relationships with employers. It is fair to say that most of the employers that we use tend to be smaller rather than larger employers. I would say that, generally, the vacancy situation is quite good.

[233] **Ms McLellan:** One of the things that we come up against occasionally is that larger employers, in particular, look for multi-skilling, so, sometimes, for a simple job such as trolley portering—that is the usual example that I give—they would want the person doing that job, at a pinch, to operate the till. That creates difficulties for us when we are canvassing for people who have a learning disability. The other problem, sometimes, is that there is not a huge workforce in many employment environments now, and if you are looking to find a natural support after we have phased out, that can sometimes be quite difficult, particularly in big supermarkets and places such as that. However, because we canvass on a one-to-one basis for a particular person with a particular employer, we usually get a good response, and people are interested in taking on our jobseekers. Chris, do you have anything to add about the schools work project and how you find the employers responding to this?

[234] **Ms Evans:** I have found them to be very good. Because I am not going in there for a job, we have been lucky enough with the older students, and some of them have been so good that they have had a Saturday job out of it, and a couple have gone straight on to work for over 24 hours a week, so they will get a full-time job after it. Because I am just looking for placements, they are very good at having us there and supplying us with work experiences, which, for the better ones, has been great when they got a job.

[235] **Mr Barker:** There is some difficulty with regard to contacting employers as so many people are trying to do the same thing. We are a supporting employment agency, and you also have the schools and colleges, as well as Jobcentre Plus, looking for work placements, and, sometimes, the employers are a little daunted by the number of people who are coming to them to look for work placements.

[236] **Ms McLellan:** I think that our strong selling point is that we offer coaching. So, if a young person without any knowledge or experience of work comes into your shop, office or whatever, the fact that a job coach will also come in is a very positive selling point.

[237] **Ms Evans:** That means that they do not have to release any of their staff, and anything that the jobseeker cannot do, we can do it for them, if it is a specific job.

[238] **Ms McLellan:** Basically, we make sure that the job is done, even if we are bridging the gap during a period of training.

[239] **Janet Ryder:** So, advice, advocacy and support are crucial to securing the work

placement.

[240] **Ms Evans:** It is certainly the one-to-one training or on-site training.

11.50 a.m.

[241] **Janet Ryder:** I will take you back, if I may, to the slide that you put up with the heading 'the long and winding road'. It shows that people go through stages and then, halfway down the page, we see that, several years later, they get referred to a disability employment adviser. That would imply that many people are being lost or left in the system—

[242] **Ms Evans:** Who still have not finished.

[243] **Janet Ryder:** Yes. You could look at it as their going back on the same course, time after time, in many cases. What needs to happen in that situation?

[244] **Ms McLellan:** Gosh, that is a steep one. Quite often, the reason for young people going onto further education is not so much that they want to stay in further education but is related to care, benefits and giving the parents respite, almost. If there is a possibility that someone can stay on for another year in a full-term college course, very often, the parents will be quite keen for that to happen because, in many ways, it solves the problem of care. I am not saying that the college just repeats the course over and over again, because that would not be fair. However, people will probably be extending their experiences width-wise, whereas perhaps it would be better for them to get out into the world of work, with additional support, so that they start to develop as young adults rather than staying as students for quite a long time, in some cases.

[245] **Ms Evans:** We do get parents who are realistic and do not think that their children are going to get anything more out of academic education. They will come and say, 'I really want her to get out into the world of work and start gaining that experience', but many parents are scared about the consequences regarding care and benefits.

[246] **Mr Barker:** Apart from our schools work project, the next stage at which we will get involved is when I go along to the colleges and get involved with the exit interviews of people whom the college can do no more with, and for whom work then becomes an option. If we were to get involved earlier, we could make work an option for them at an earlier stage, and we could do a lot more with it.

[247] **Janet Ryder:** Have you any suggestions that we may be able to consider that might encourage that to happen?

[248] **Ms McLellan:** I think that, for young people moving from school into college, it would be very helpful if careers advice suggested work as an option rather than saying that college is by default the best option. However, although the schools work project and similar projects throughout Wales are highly regarded by the careers service, we are doing it on a shoestring. This type of support should be available for any young person in that transitional stage who needs additional support to go into employment. So, as always, it is a question of putting resources into that transitional gap.

[249] Work-based learning, for example, which the careers service could recommend, creates real difficulties with benefits. A careers adviser from Careers Wales West told me that when young persons with a disability go onto work-based learning programmes, they immediately have a training allowance, but their disability benefits are stopped, so they go from an income of perhaps £60 or £70 a week to one of £45 a week. It is possible to claim

that back and they will, eventually, do so, but it is a big disincentive, particularly for families supporting someone who has additional needs. The soft option is to say, 'Go into further education, because it does not disrupt the benefits system and you can probably get something out of it', and I am sure that a lot of young people do that. To be fair, we work very closely with Neath Port Talbot College, which has a very good programme. Young people do a lot of work experience, they come to us following their placements with employers and, quite often, we can convert those jobs into paid employment. So, in some instances it can work.

[250] **Jeff Cuthbert:** That is very interesting. Please forgive me if you mentioned this and I did not hear it, but I note the point that you make about benefits and the problems that can be caused there, and I think that that needs to be reviewed. It is not a devolved matter as such, but it needs to be addressed.

[251] In terms of learners—whether they are young people or young adults—who are going into this type of schools work project, what is the outcome, if any, in terms of recognition and qualification? Is anything gained from this? Are they assessed, for example, against key skills at level 1? Is that included in the programme?

[252] **Ms McLellan:** We are—sort of—pioneering something at the moment; we have not started it with the schools work project, but we are doing it with other jobseekers. We are mapping skills acquired in work to the adult literacy and numeracy core curriculum, which is part of the national qualification framework. For example, if someone is working in car valeting, the duties of the job are identified as following simple instructions, listening and responding, contributing appropriately to simple oral interactions, and asking simple questions. Those duties are then mapped against the adult literacy core curriculum, namely speaking and listening, listening and responding, communicating and engaging in discussion. I do not think that anyone else is doing that at the moment, and we are just trying this out in Swansea.

[253] **Mr Barker:** There is an initial assessment of the person and, at the end of the work placement, we hold a review to see whether the person has taken those skills on board and can do them without assistance.

[254] **Ms McLellan:** There is no formal qualification at the moment that someone will definitely go through when they have work experience with us, but we think that the core and basic skills that they pick up there can be mapped to recognised qualifications. We think that that is really important, because we have been offering work experience for years and, at the end of it, the person can have a positive report from the employer, but has nothing that could be said to be recognised nationally as a qualification. This is the start of that. In the past, we have worked with the open college. We had a work awareness club running at one time and we had accreditation through the National Open College Network. So, we are making forays into getting qualifications through on-the-job training, rather than through going to college.

[255] **Mr Barker:** It is based on the practical skills and duties needed in the work environment.

[256] **Peter Black:** When people come to you from school or college, what level of preparation have they had for the world of work, and are you able to have any input into that, or is it just hit and miss?

[257] **Ms McLellan:** It is a bit hit and miss, to be honest. Some young people will have had work experience placements outside college, but a lot of them will have had placements on the college campus, doing things such as valeting staff cars or working in the college canteen, and will not have been out in the hurly burly of a real employment situation. Mike, would you like to comment on that?

[258] **Mr Barker:** Nothing actually beats doing the job itself: getting out into the real work environment and meeting employers' needs. Our organisation is very much centred on meeting employers' needs and providing the support to enable a person to do that. It is very difficult to try to duplicate that within a college canteen, where there is perhaps too much support and the demands are not there. The other concern that I have is about the choice of work experience that takes place in college and whether it is appropriate for someone who will be moving into employment afterwards. For example, although someone may get work experience in a nursery where they just sit and talk to the kids, there is little chance of that person then being employed as a nursery assistant because they would need qualifications and so on, so that experience could mislead the person into making a career choice that was not available to them. There are areas in which we would like to get involved at an earlier stage whereas, at the moment, we get involved when someone is at the exit interview.

[259] **Jeff Cuthbert:** That experience might still give them transferable skills.

[260] **Mr Barker:** Definitely. I am not saying that there is no use to it, but it is perhaps a case of choosing the placement carefully.

12.00 p.m.

[261] **Ms McLellan:** We are talking about a very particular client group—people with learning disabilities—and it has been shown that it is quite difficult for people with a learning disability to transfer abstract concepts from one environment to another. That is why our argument is that it is most powerful to place and train the person within the work environment, rather than offering theoretical training prior to placing, and their having to start again with slightly different skills in the work environment. I take your point that there are generic skills that you can learn in any working environment, even if they are only to turn up on time, to dress tidily, to listen to your manager telling you what to do, and to follow instructions. Almost any work experience is better than no work experience.

[262] **Jeff Cuthbert:** We cannot even do those things. [*Laughter.*]

[263] **Peter Black:** Thank you. I am sorry that we have had only a short time. We now have a video conference with Deeside College, which you are welcome to stay to watch if you wish. Thank you for coming to make your presentation, and we will take on board what you say as part of the conclusions of our review.

12.01 p.m.

Adolygiad Polisi AAA: Rhan 3—Casglu Tystiolaeth Policy Review of SEN: Part 3—Evidence Gathering

[264] **Peter Black:** I welcome Joe Phillips, the learning support manager, and Ian Dickson, director of curriculum and qualifications from Deeside College. Just to remind you, we are taking a verbatim record of the meeting, which will be on our committee pages on the internet. You will have a chance to look at it before we publish it.

[265] Given that we are doing this by video link, I remind Members to wait until their microphone comes on before speaking. That would be useful; otherwise, our presenters will not be able to hear you. Would you like to make some brief opening remarks about what is happening at Deeside College?

[266] **Mr Dickson:** Yes. Thank you for inviting us to participate in the committee, specifically on issues relating to transition. My name is Ian Dickson, and I am the director of

curriculum and quality at Deeside College. I am accompanied by my colleague, Joe Phillips, who is the learning support manager here.

[267] We would like to make a few summary points relating to the response paper, which I believe has already been circulated to you. Joe will summarise some of the key points of our response, and I will come back to highlight some of the specific emerging good practice that we have in Flintshire and Deeside.

[268] **Mr Phillips:** Thank you, Ian. Dialogue between schools and colleges tends to be ad hoc in the context of transition and planning, and information exchange. At the moment, it is not systematic or consistent. That is point one. Employment opportunities are varied across the counties and there are some opportunities for supported employment. However, the main avenues are within sheltered employment opportunities. There are far fewer opportunities for learners and service users with more profound support needs. Multi-agency working is difficult to organise, owing to time constraints and no clearly identified lead roles. Resources linked to statements of need do not follow the learner, for example, when a learner leaves school, the identified support ceases. Colleges must then start from scratch in assessing need and putting new support in place, where applicable. The role of Careers Wales in relation to section 140 assessments is not effective, especially when used for considering applications for residential placements outside the main further education provision. I will now pass you back to Ian for more comments.

[269] **Mr Dickson:** Thanks, Joe. That provides a summary of some of the background to the points in the paper. I want to draw the committee's attention to two areas of what we consider to be emerging good practice being developed in Flintshire, involving Deeside College.

[270] The first relates to the college working with Flintshire local education authority on implementing the use of a common assessment tool. We are using a tool called 'the basic and key skills builder' within Flintshire and there has been an agreement across the county for that to be used as a common assessment tool. We are also working collectively on some transition planning protocols across Flintshire to address some of the issues that Joe raised in those summary points.

[271] The second joint working activity to which I would like to draw the committee's attention is in relation to discussions with health and social services. We are having discussions on protocols again for transition arrangements into the college and then, equally importantly, from the college into the community and into employment. So, those are two of the areas that, perhaps, we can discuss if people have questions.

[272] In conclusion, from our point of view, we feel that most of the findings of the 'Choosing the next steps' report—the Estyn survey report—are as valid today as they were when the report was published in April 2004. We concur with most of the salient points made in that report.

[273] Finally, we feel that transition into further education tends to be the main challenge in relation to learners with moderate learning difficulties, whereas transition from further education tends to be the main challenge relating to learners who have more complex needs.

[274] Thank you for giving us the opportunity to introduce that. We are quite happy to answer any questions that committee members might have.

[275] **Peter Black:** Thank you very much. Does anyone have any questions?

[276] **Janet Ryder:** A lot of concerns have been raised about the transition from school

into college or college into higher education or into work, and records not following everyone. You said that, in many cases, the assessments have to start again. From your experience and from the work that you are developing, what can we do to make sure that you get a continuation so that the records follow the person and they do not have to go back to stage one and start assessments again?

[277] **Mr Dickson:** That raises a number of issues about the confidentiality of information, and that needs to be borne in mind when making requirements rather than recommendations. Particularly in the context of working in the 11 to 18 area, the flow of information from secondary schools to the college is not always as smooth as we would like it to be, because, at the end of the day, there is a competitive as well as a collaborative relationship between the institutions. Perhaps there needs to be stronger guidance, at least, and even a requirement, at most, to pass that information on.

[278] **Janet Ryder:** We have heard today and in previous evidence about the need for much greater individual support. Is there any need for that individual support to continue in order to see the same support, if you like, continuing from school into college, or into employment, depending upon what is chosen, so that students have one person whom they know they can relate to and who can help them to transfer the records and assessments?

[279] **Mr Phillips:** That is a very good point. Linked to what Ian was saying about our current collaboration with the Flintshire Local Education Authority, we are working on those protocols. As Ian said, there is an issue about data protection. However, if we can overcome that and were working more collaboratively, we could then work with the schools. In the response from the college, another concern was about the lack of funding to support the transition in year 11 of a person leaving school into further education or into other training. So, if that were the case, and if those people were to come to join the local further education or other provision, it would be a positive move forward. However, there is the issue of time when it comes to linking with the schools and with key people. We have 12 secondary schools and three special schools, for example, in Flintshire. So, collating all of that and working together is a large task.

12.10 p.m.

[280] **Janet Ryder:** Given the frameworks that are coming in with the 14-19 Pathways, and the individual learning coaches that will be developed as part of that, as well as greater collaboration between schools and colleges, can you see a way in which that can be used to help this situation?

[281] **Mr Dickson:** That is an excellent point. I can see real possibilities there. We have a network of learning coaches in Flintshire, and particularly during their training and development phase, they meet to share issues and good practice. So, perhaps that is an avenue that can be used once we have got through the initial development and training stage. Again, it is about putting mechanisms in place to ensure that those individuals carry on meeting to exchange that type of information, because the stronger the personal contacts are, the more effective the transitions are likely to be.

[282] **Mr Phillips:** I will add to that, if I may. We are heavily involved with the Learning Pathways Flintshire network; both Ian and I are members. I am on the learning coach and learning support network sub-group, and also on the options sub-group and the core sub-group. So, we are working through these initiatives, with our involvement with our local authority.

[283] **Jeff Cuthbert:** It is right that in this transition stage there is proper joined-up thinking and discussion among all appropriate agencies, but I would like to know a little bit

more. If I noted it correctly, you said that you are having discussions with health and social services about the transition into further education and employment. Could you say a little more about that?

[284] **Mr Phillips:** Yes, certainly. If you recall, a few years ago there was a White Paper called 'Fulfilling the Promises', and there was a reference to FE as a part of that. It was not a high priority in the first instance for social services, because there were other major priorities that it had to look at. However, over the last three or four months, I have been invited to attend its strategic planning group, and part of the remit for me in particular, is looking at the FE initiatives linked to 'Fulfilling the Promises'. We have met three times, and in that third meeting, we decided to set up a transition planning group. That group will involve transition planning into FE, as Ian said earlier, and, more importantly, out of FE, with joined-up thinking, preparation and the realistic time constraints so that people have time to plan, to fund and to move our young people onwards. There is also an issue from the lifelong learning point of view, for social services, in relation to people who have been working in sheltered employment or other opportunities coming back into FE for further training. So there is transition out of FE and back into FE, which is linked to joined-up thinking and tied up to 'Fulfilling the Promises'. So things are happening. Does that answer your question?

[285] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Yes, thank you, but I would like the opportunity to develop the question a little bit more. In terms of the transition out of FE, which, hopefully, would be into employment, does the link continue between health and social services and prospective employers?

[286] **Mr Phillips:** It does, but I am not totally familiar with the processes. We try to be effective in moving our young people forward into social services, and the only link that we then have is if there is a need, which is rare. We are building on that, and in those rare instances when students come back to us, we re-engage with social services.

[287] Interestingly enough, this year we have started working on a work-based adventure with the local social services. We are providing support in sheltered employment for young people or social service users, with support from us, going into the environment on a work-based learning initiative.

[288] **Peter Black:** I think that you said that there was a difficulty with people with severe learning difficulties in the transition from college to work. Did I hear that correctly?

[289] **Mr Dickson:** Yes, you did. That is why we are trying to draw the distinction between the issues facing learners with moderate needs and those with more complex needs. Where learners have more complex needs, and this came through in the Estyn survey that I referred to earlier, the chances of progression to employment are relatively small for many from that group. As a consequence of that, there are progression issues. Perhaps there is a need for clearer guidance on issues such as lateral progression. The progression, for that group, tends to be more from further education into more further education, either within the area of learning itself—other independent living skills programmes—or, for some of those learners, into vocational programmes. That raises several other issues about that student's chances of fully succeeding on that vocational route. So, it opens up many tensions, with the result, perhaps—and this was also commented on in the survey—that there is a danger of some learners ending up staying in further education for too long.

[290] **Peter Black:** Having identified that problem, is there anything that we and the Assembly Government should be doing to try to address that?

[291] **Mr Dickson:** There is a need for some guidance on that. We have been monitoring developments through the press and across the border. We believe that the Learning and

Skills Council will publish a strategy for this group of learners sometime this month. We might need to look at that in Wales in terms of providing clearer guidance on what is best practice, particularly for those learners with more complex needs.

[292] **Peter Black:** I do not think that there are more questions. Thank you for appearing before the committee today and for giving your evidence. We will take it on board as part of our report.

[293] There are some papers to note: the minutes of the previous meeting, the development of the European qualifications framework and the action points from the Minister.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 12.18 p.m.
The meeting ended at 12.18 p.m.